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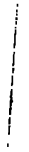

THE

PEOPLE OF PERSIA.

By JOHN KITTO, D.D., F.S.A.

LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
Instituted 1799.

1857.

203. d. 96.

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THE

PEOPLE OF PERSIA.

CHAPTER I.

PERSIA.

CONSIDERABLE information concerning Persia and its inhabitants, has been transmitted to modern times by the ancient classical historians, and by some of the sacred writers. We are thus enabled to perceive that the modern Persians retain the characteristics of their ancestors, to an extent unequalled probably by any other Asiatic nation that has remained in the same land in which their progenitors lived, and come down unbroken from so early a period. This is not the case, however, with the territorial limits of the country. These have varied with the ebbing and flowing tide of every dynasty, and almost of every reign.

"The limits of this kingdom in its most prosperous period," says sir John Malcolm, "may, however, be easily described; the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean to the south; the Indus and the Oxus to the east and north-east; the Caspian Sea and Mount Caucasus to the north; and the river Euphrates to the west. Vast territories on either side must now, however, be struck off from this large outline, in looking for the present and actual boundaries of Persia. It does, indeed, still reach to the Caspian Sea on the north, and to the Persian Gulf on the south. But the wild regions of Beloochistan shut it far off from the Indian Ocean and the lower part of the Indus; Affghanistan places it at a still further remove from the higher portions of that river; the domains of the Usbegs and Turcomans interpose a broad and formidable barrier between the Persians and the Oxus; Russia has pressed them down from the Caucasus, and from Georgia and Armenia, as far as the river Aras, and even below that river many leagues before it reaches the Caspian Sea; and, on the west, so far from compassing Mesopotamia to the river Euphrates, Persia is restricted by its Turkish neighbours to a natural mountain

boundary, far east of the Tigris and its tributaries, till we approach the Persian Gulf."

Thus circumscribed, modern Persia is still, however, a very extensive kingdom, from about eight hundred to one thousand miles square—though its proper shape is rhomboidal rather than square, being at least a third larger from north-west to south-east than in the transverse direction. Geographically, it lies between 26° and 40° north latitude, and between 44° and 59° east longitude. The present population, although no accurate census is ever taken, may be roughly estimated at ten millions—a small number for so old and large a kingdom; but in these regions, wars, misgovernment, pestilence, polygamy, and, perhaps more than all together, the smallpox, prevent that rapid increase of population which we witness in our own and other countries.

The provinces of Persia are Fars, Irâk, Laristân, Kuzistân, a portion of Kurdistân, Azerbijân, Ghilân, Mazanderân, and the western sections of Khorassân and Kermân. The present capital is Teherân, in the province of Irâk, situated towards the northern part of the kingdom, but nearly central from east to west.

Elam is the ancient Scriptural name of

Persia, from Elam the son of Shem, whose descendants are supposed to have been the first inhabitants of at least the western provinces, one of which took from them the name of Elymais. Irane is the term applied by the present inhabitants to their country; and Iranee, or Iranloo, (as the appellation takes the Persian or the Turkish form,) to its people. Fars, or Pars, in Hebrew, *Pārăs*, from which Europeans derive the name of Persia, and apply it to the whole country, as it was also used by the Greeks and Romans, and by some of the sacred writers, is only the southern portion of the empire, as the name is now employed by the natives, and as a designation for their whole country it is utterly unknown to them.

Ajem, (which means a clown, or rude person, equivalent to the *barbarian*, *βάρβαρος*, of the Greeks,) and Ajemistan, (clown-land,) are names which the self-conceited Osmanlees have given to what they regard as their less polished neighbours, and their home, back in the interior. No names were ever less justly applied, where the relative condition of those who give the name, and of those to whom it is given, are taken into account. The Persians, however, regardless of the origin of the names and of the

indignity implied in them, have also adopted them. *Kuzzil-bash*, red-head, is another name which they gave to the Sunnees, and which they have taken to themselves. It originated in the time of the Shah Ismail. The tribes which were attached to his family, and which became the most devoted promoters of the Sheah faith, were distinguished by their red-caps; the term Kuzzil-bash was thence attached to the Sheahs in general, and has thus extended to all the Persians—although, in its literal signification of "red-head," it is now more applicable to the Turks themselves than to the Persians.

A sketch of the physical characteristics of Persia may be given in a few words from Malcolm's history of that country. "The most striking features of this extensive country are deserts and mountains, amid which are interspersed beautiful valleys and rich pastures. . . . The valleys in the central provinces of Persia abound with the richest and most valuable vegetable productions, and may be cultivated to any extent. Trees are seldom found, except near the towns and villages; but the luxuriance with which they grow, wherever planted, shows that the climate is congenial to them. The

orchards of Persia produce all the fruits of the temperate zone; and its wilds abound with flowers that can only be reared in the gardens of Europe by care and cultivation. The climate is very various. It is not more affected by the difference of latitude than by the remarkable inequalities of surface in almost all the provinces. The greater part of the country is a succession of plains, at the base of these ridges of hills by which it is intersected, and of table-lands nearly on a level with their tops. To pass from the lower valleys to the higher is to change the temperature of summer for that of winter. But the climate, though various, is healthy; and few countries can boast a more robust, active, and well-formed race of men. Its animals (particularly the horses and dogs) are of uncommon size, strength, and beauty. In the mountains, most valuable minerals are found, but none in abundance; and Persia has consequently always been indebted to foreign countries for lead, iron, silver, and gold."

Since this was written, rich mines of copper and iron have been opened in Azerbijân. Coal has also been found, to a limited extent, in that province, and in the neighbourhood of

Teherân: and it doubtless only needs that science and enterprise, which, along with the blessings of the gospel, that land must yet receive, to relieve Persia from her present dependence upon her neighbours for the most useful minerals, and enable her to develop large resources of future industry and peaceful wealth. It may also be remarked, that the statement as to the lack of trees, although correct as to the central, does not apply to the Caspian provinces of Mazanderân and Ghilân, which are clothed with vast and beautiful forests.

CHAPTER II.

DWELLINGS AND DOMESTIC HABITS.

THE general aspect of the towns and villages in Persia is very sombre and uninviting, and contrast disadvantageously with those of Turkey, or indeed with almost every other Asiatic region, except, perhaps, the subterraneous villages of Armenia. The streets are crooked, narrow, irregular, and but partially if at all paved. They are inconvenient from dust in summer, and in winter are almost impassable on foot from mud. There is nothing in them to interest the eye or to engage the attention, as they rarely present anything to the street but dreary mud walls, from eight to fifteen feet high, with here and there low doors, at irregular intervals, and sometimes over them one small latticed window, being the only indication of human habitation. The doors or gates have a signi-

ficance with respect to the standing or the prudence of the inhabitants; the high, large gate is a token of wealth, which provokes the envy of equals, who will not be slow to find accusations; or excites the cupidity of superiors, who can readily discover pretexts sufficient to relieve the ostentatious owner of his surplus revenue, if not to strip him of something more. This was also anciently true in Israel; for among the sayings of Solomon is this—"He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction."

The doors by which the mud walls are thus pierced, lead by a narrow, blind passage, to open courts or squares, on the further side of which, and sometimes on all sides, is the dwelling. If the buildings occupy but part of the square, the remaining portions are inclosed by high mud walls, forming a kind of fort, for security against robbers and the intrusion of curiosity. In many towns, the entrance passage slopes downward, and the court to which it leads is several feet below the level of the street, the earth on the spot having been used to construct the edifices and the walls which inclose them; for, as the Persians have no wheeled vehicles, the transport of building-

materials, on the backs of horses or mules, would be expensive and inconvenient.

The houses in Persia are of three general orders, corresponding in appearance and expense to the higher, middle, and lower classes of the people. The two former are built of sun-dried bricks. The palaces of princes and of rich nobles are sometimes built of burned brick and lime; but these are of rare occurrence. The houses are low, making up for the lack of height by the extent of the ground they cover. We scarcely know whether to describe them as of two stories or of one. They are both, or neither; or rather, partly one, and partly the other. A house consists of a range of rooms, with alternately high and low ceilings; and over the lower ones, which are usually the halls through which the others are entered, low upper rooms are built, whose roofs rise but little, if at all, above those of the high ones of the lower story. The windows completely fill the whole front of the rooms, except the spaces occupied by two pillars in large rooms; and they open from a few inches above the floor, to a height of five or six feet. A room thus thrown open is delightfully cool in summer, especially when

shaded by the extensive canvass awnings used in Persia.

The windows are constructed of polygonal spaces, in appearance like the compartments of a honeycomb, one, two, or three inches in diameter. Those in which the interstices are of the smallest pattern are left open—that is, without the spaces being filled up—so that the air is admitted freely, while a person can look through without being observed from without. The window toward the street is usually of this kind; and such was doubtless the kind of "lattice" through which the mother of Sisera, with her ladies, (Judges v. 28,) looked forth for her expected son. These sashes, when of wider texture, are usually filled with small diamond-shaped pieces of glass, which are translucent, but not transparent, corresponding in size to the interstices, and of various bright glaring colours, which give to the whole, as viewed from within, a brilliant and somewhat imposing appearance. A single window of a Persian parlour, thus glazed, will cost twenty or thirty pounds, or even much more, according to the delicacy of the wood-work, for in all kinds of joining the Persians are great amateurs, and are really very skilful. It is related by Mr. Fraser, that

the Persian princes, who were some years ago in London, seemed to bestow more genuine admiration on nothing than on the various curious specimens of joinery and wood-carving which came incidentally under their notice. The middle classes cover their sashes with oiled paper; and another circumstance in which their houses differ from those of the higher class is, that the latter are mounted in front with a projection, from two to five feet wide, which consist of jutting rafters, inclining a little upward, on which jointed planks are fitted, and the whole is often tastefully painted and curiously carved. This projection adds much to the beauty of the edifice, as well as protects its walls and windows from the weather.

If the houses in Palestine, as is not unlikely, were of similar arrangements, our Lord probably stood in the gallery formed by this projection, when the friends of the paralytic man vainly sought access to him through the crowd which filled the court, and therefore went up to the roof, and, removing some of the boards which covered this part, were enabled to let their helpless friend down to the place where Jesus stood. Our acquaintance with various oriental houses, has presented difficul-

ties to every other explanation, and has shown this to be the most natural and intelligible of any. To remove any part of the substantial flat roof for such a purpose, would be very difficult, and would overwhelm the interior with the dust and rubbish of which such roofs are composed.

The outsides of the houses in Persia are plastered with a mixture of mud and cut straw, of which also, as in ancient Egypt, (Exod. v. 7,) the sun-dried bricks are composed. This is not unpleasant to the European eye, (probably from its having some rough resemblance to what we call Roman cement,) especially when, as is often the case, the margins of the doors and windows are dressed with white plaster, which, alternating with the spaces of brown mud, impart a kind of liveliness to the front.

But when we enter the interior of a good Persian house, we forget the narrow approach, and that the walls and exterior surface are of mud. The rooms are beautifully plastered with an admirable white gypsum, much firmer, harder, and more dazzlingly white, than anything of the same kind we possess, and the floors are covered with the richest carpets the east can furnish. The floors are first plastered with

a mixture of lime and earth, and are thus rendered hard and level; they are then covered with the reed mats, over which the carpets are laid. It is probably known to most of our readers that these carpets, which are so much prized by us, under the name of "Turkey carpets," are really the manufacture of Persia.

The walls in the interior of the rooms are not dead surfaces, but are relieved by a row of recesses, about a yard square, the same height from the floor, and a few inches deep, at intervals of a foot or more from each other. High rooms have two rows of such recesses, with a ledge projecting two or three inches, to separate them. These recesses are intended for effect rather than use, but some of them are occasionally used to contain curious ornamental articles. Plastering is also often wrought into various diamonds, and curious geometrical figures, and into arabesques, flowers, and cornices of considerable elegance. The walls are not unusually painted, sometimes painted and gilded; and, at others—but rarely, unless in royal palaces—they are almost wholly lined with mirrors. Results which are tawdry, rather than splendid, when supplying the *substantial* magnificence which we expect to find in royal

palaces, are agreeable and elegant in private houses; and, upon the whole, the Persians may be praised for the interior decorations of their rooms by the arts of the joiner and the plasterer. The ceilings are often wholly of unpainted wood, forming a large and admirable piece of joinery, like an immense sash, with innumerable blind panes or compartments, of the same wood as the framework. These ceilings are made on the floor, and raised whole to their place, by very simple though ingenious mechanical contrivances. They are seen only in good houses, and are highly and justly prized by the Persians.

The courts which form the areas of their dwellings are, in the higher class of houses, neatly paved, in the borders and through the centres, with smooth stones or tiles, and the intervening spaces are decorated with flower-beds, rose-bushes, and other shrubs, and often bubbling fountains. "As I have beheld princes and nobles," says the Rev. Judkin Perkins,*

* In a work entitled "*A Residence of Eight Years in Persia,*" published at Andover, in the United States, in 1843. It is chiefly occupied with the Nestorians, but it contains many interesting observations respecting Persia, which have usefully assisted our own observations in the preparation of this work, particularly in the present portion of it.

" in their mansions, reclining and lolling on their soft carpets, under the shade of the broad canvass awning stretched above the windows, on a hot summer's day, supported by soft cushions and pillows under their arm-pits, gurgling the *kaleon*, * or sipping the acid *sherbet*, † regaled by the fragrance of the flower-garden, and the chirping and cooing of birds in their cages, suspended from the shrubbery, or skipping free in its branches, my early conceptions of an eastern paradise have seemed to be realized. When, however, we remember the corroding apprehensions that incessantly prey upon their minds, in the uncertain tenure of their wealth, and the peril of their lives in that land of despotism, ‡ the burning passions that war in their bosoms, and the poignant stings of a buffeting conscience for their ill-gotten gains, if for no worse crime, which embitter the sweetest cups of their luxury, and implant thorns on their pillows of down,

* A pipe, by which the smoking tobacco is drawn through an attached vase containing water, by which it is cooled before reaching the mouth.

† Drinks, made like lemonade, of the juices of fruits, mixed with water and sugar.

‡ Of this the reader may obtain information from the volume on "*The Court of Persia*," in the present Monthly Series.

there is little in such a paradise to covet or envy."

This is true. The constant feeling of insecurity of property and life in the east, and particularly in Persia, is, except to very reckless tempers, a terrible drawback to all enjoyment of, and comfort in, the happiest external circumstances, although it might be a useful discipline to those who know how to lay up treasure in heaven, and to have their hearts, along with their treasures, there. It tends to generate that living for the hour, which is the characteristic of the Persians, beyond all the nations of the earth, and which is well expressed in the sentiment, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

What may be called the middle class of houses in Persia, are often plastered with a simple mixture of mud and chopped straw, the same as is used on the outside; and the floors are, of course, spread with carpets of an inferior quality. The pavements of the courts are also rude, or of the naked earth, and a small open rill, taken from the larger canals, supplies the place of fountains.

The roofs of the houses in Persia are flat, and terraced over with earth. Stout timbers

are first laid across the walls, about two feet apart. These are covered over with split sticks of wood, at intervals of perhaps three inches, on which are spread rush mats; then succeeds a thick layer of a rank, thorny weed, which grows abundantly on the mountains, in a bushy globular form, about a foot or two in diameter. This weed is so resinous as not soon to decay, is an excellent article of light fuel, and is much used for burning brick, heating ovens, etc. It may be "the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," as mentioned by our Saviour. Upon the thick layer of this mud is spread a coat of clay-mortar, which is trodden down; and next, a stratum of dry earth, six or eight inches deep, over which is plastered a layer of the same mixed straw and mud which is so much used in facing the walls. An occasional depression on the back edge of the roof, furnished with a spout, a few feet long, conducts off the water.

The soil is so tenacious in all parts of Persia, that there is little danger that a roof thus constructed will be pervious to the rain, if kept in a state of good repair. It is annually plastered over with the straw and mud, except

in the driest parts of the country; and, in the northern parts, the roofs are rolled over after heavy rains, and snow is thrown off with a shovel as soon as it falls. These flat roofs are pleasant resorts to the inhabitants of the houses during the cool of the evening. The people sleep on them during the heat of summer, on account of the cool air and the freedom from vermin. The excessive dryness of the atmosphere prevents any danger from this practice, and it is said to be harmless even where the dews are heavy, as upon the shores of the Persian Gulf. The roofs are secured by "a battlement," not only to prevent accidents, as enjoined by the law of Moses, but that one family may not gaze upon another's premises; for which reason the "battlement," or top wall, is generally higher than a man on the side towards neighbouring houses. This is important, because Persian custom sanctions the shooting or stoning, without trial or mercy, of any indiscreet gazer into the neighbouring premises; and we may say that we have lived for years in oriental houses, repairing daily to the house-top, without once daring to raise our head above the parapet, lest a bullet should be sent through it. The reader will recollect the con-

formity of these facts with usages of the roof mentioned in Scripture; and he will call to mind the sad sin and calamities into which David fell, in consequence of indulging in an idle curiosity, while walking upon the house-top.

It remains to notice the third or lowest class of dwellings, inhabited by the peasantry. The wall of these are built not even of unburned bricks, but of layers of mud, like the "cob-walls" of Devonshire cottages. They are of but one story, and that is commonly low. The soil is so strong in most parts of Persia, that water has only to be conducted upon almost any spot to form tenacious mortar, which is dug up by the spade, and slightly worked by the feet of men, and then laid into a wall, piece being laid upon piece by hand, four feet thick, and three feet high. This is allowed to harden and dry a few days, when another layer, of similar dimensions, but a little thinner, is laid upon it, and the same process is repeated till the wall is carried up to the desired elevation. These walls, when thoroughly dried, are very hard, and, if kept perfectly dry, by being plastered over with the universal plaster of mud and chopped straw, may last for generations. Such,

without doubt, are "the houses of clay" of which Job makes mention. The walls that inclose the courts of the houses, and the walls of the towns in Persia, are of the same construction, the thickness of those at the bottom being commenced in proportion to the intended height. The roofs of the peasants' houses have no projections; nor have they any windows; a hole in the roof is an outlet for the smoke, and admits a few rays of light.

Each house of the peasants in Persia has its open courts inclosed by walls; and the stables, barns, and out-houses, are entered by different doors from those which conduct to the apartments of the family. The premises in the villages are contiguous to each other for the sake of security; and it is possible to walk over the roofs through the whole length of a village without descending into the streets. As this implies, the roofs are not usually, as in towns, guarded by top-walls, though the inmates sleep on these in summer, the manners of the villagers being more simple, if not their morals more pure than those of the towns' people. The courts of these dwellings are usually, in some sort, farm-yards; but such is the fondness

of all kinds of Persians for flowers, that a small patch, even in the humblest court, is usually kept as a flower-garden. Another circumstance which agreeably distinguishes the villages of Persia from those of Turkey, is the presence of clumps of trees, in or near them; so that a traveller is enabled to distinguish his destined resting-place in the distance long before he reaches it.

The oven used in the villages is primitive and curious, and deserves description. It consists of a circular hole in the earth, in the middle of the chief room, about three feet deep, and perhaps two in width at the top and three at the bottom, with a flue entering it there, to convey air to the fire. This hole is internally coated with clay, which soon hardens into tile. The bread is drawn out in thin cakes, from two to three feet long, eight or ten inches wide, and scarcely the thickness of a common dinner-plate. It assumes this shape almost in a moment by the wonderful tact of the maker, who simply tosses a piece of dough rapidly from hand to hand. Thus drawn out like a membrane, it is laid upon a sort of cushion, and stuck on to the side of the oven, where it attaches and crisps in a few seconds, and

another, as quickly made ready, succeeds to the same place. Bread in the cities differs from this only in being made of flour more finely sifted, and in thicker cakes, which are baked at the bottom of large ovens paved with pebbles. The thin bread soon dries, and may long be preserved. Except on a journey, however, it is usually baked every day, and eaten fresh; and as every family bakes its own bread daily, there is none to sell any that may be accidentally required; whence the arrival of strangers soon occasions the master to give the same order "to bake cakes upon the hearth," which the arrival of the three seeming wayfarers induced Abraham to give to Sarah. We were always much interested with this and other Biblical recollections, in observing the regularity with which our arrival at any village habitation was followed by this operation of baking bread, which there were thus frequent opportunities of observing.

But the baking of bread is not the only use of the *tanoor*, or oven of the peasants. It serves also the important purpose of warming the room in winter most effectually, at a wonderfully small expenditure of fuel; which, indeed, in most parts of Persia, is very

scarce. That it may serve this purpose the more completely, it is converted into a *tandoor*, by laying a flat stone, or a large earthen covering, made for the purpose, over the top, and placing over this a frame resembling a low table, four or six feet square, and perhaps a foot high, and covering the whole with a large thick quilt, which extends to the ground on all sides. The oven is heated only once a day for baking and cooking. But the hole in the roof over it, being closed after the smoke has passed out, and the warmth retained in the oven in the manner described, a single fire is made to suffice for the whole twenty-four hours. The whole family encompass the tandoor, sitting on the ground, with their feet under the quilt, to keep themselves warm, which by this process is perfectly accomplished even in the coldest weather. At night, they spread their couches around it, and form a circle by placing their feet near the fire, while their heads radiate from it, and thus they socially sleep. Barbarous as this invention may seem, and unwholesome as it certainly is, it is by no means confined to the peasantry, but is found in the noblest mansions of the

cities, only burning more agreeable fuel than the villagers can command.

The Persians have no candles for lighting their houses. They have brass cups, fixed upon rods or stands of the same metal, which they fill with pure white tallow, having a cotton wick in the middle. Sometimes, however, they burn scented tapers, the wax of which has been mixed up with oil of cinnamon, or cloves, or some other scented substances, and which therefore emit a fragrance in burning.

The furniture of a Persian house is exceedingly simple when compared with ours, as indeed is the case in all eastern countries, except in China, where the movables are in number and variety scarcely inferior to our own. We find in the best Persian dwellings, neither beds sumptuously decorated, nor tables and chairs of costly wood, nor chandeliers and lustres, nor those numberless articles of various forms and materials with which Europeans decorate their apartments. The furniture consists of a thick coarse felt, which covers the floor, over which is spread a rich Persian carpet; people in middling circumstances content themselves with the felt alone. Instead of

chairs, small mattresses, about a yard wide, are placed on the floor around the room, and covered with chintz, silk, or cloth of gold. Cushions set on end against the wall serve for leaning against. When the time of rest arrives, a mattress is spread upon the carpet, with a kind of counterpane, and two pillows of down. This is all the bed used by the Persians, among whom the employment of sheets and blankets is not known, and who rest without undressing. The mattress is of velvet, and the counterpane of silk brocade, or cloth of gold or silver. Articles of this kind are valuable, and are not changed perhaps for a century ; for the velvets and brocades are of the most lasting texture, and seem indeed scarcely ever to wear out, owing, perhaps, in part to the extreme dryness of the atmosphere.

In Persia, a native never enters a room in boots or slippers ; and a transgression of this usage by foreigners is looked upon as the height of ill-breeding, if not a premeditated insult. As the people use their carpets not only for domestic purposes, but to kneel down on when they say their prayers, they are considered in some measure sacred, and hence arises the custom of a visitor leaving his slippers

at a room door. The term "door" here means whatever denotes the way of ingress to the apartment; for although in general there is a double door of carved or painted wood, which may be closed at pleasure, yet it is so seldom shut in the day that, in summer, we usually find a silk or chintz curtain filling the vacant space of the entrance, its light drapery being not only a cooler, but a more elegant appendage; besides that a person can slip in and out without that distraction and noise caused by the frequent opening and shutting of a wooden door; for which reason, probably, the practice has been adopted in our courts of law at Westminster Hall. An attending servant raises the curtain at the approach of a visitor, and drops it when he has entered.

CHAPTER III.

HABITS OF LIFE.

THE daily routine of Persian existence will help to furnish a good notion of the condition and habits of the people. Persians of all ranks rise as soon as it is light, and perform their morning devotions. Then comes the *nachtah* or breakfast, which consists of grapes and other kinds of fruits that are in season, cheese and goats' milk, and finishes—as everything is finished in Persia—with a cup of strong coffee. The artisan then proceeds to his work, the tradesman to the bazaar, and the gentleman repairs to the *divan khaneh*, or the public room in which he receives company, and where he expects his visitors and dependants. He is probably engaged with them till nine o'clock, listening to the reports of the morning, settling disputes, and arranging domestic concerns. It is the time for him to visit the court of the

prince or governor, where he pays his obeisance, and takes care to remain sufficiently long in the presence of the person he visits to attract his observation. His kaleon always accompanies him, in charge of the servant, whose sole duty it is to attend to this important instrument of Persian existence; and when he thinks he can retire unnoticed, he regales himself with smoking. About noon, the governor probably retires, which is a signal for all those who are in attendance to take their departure. On his return home, his dinner, or more properly lunch, (*tchacht*,) is brought, consisting generally of bread, cheese, butter, and different sorts of fruits. After this meal, as before, according to the time, he says his noontide prayers, and then withdraws into the harem to his family, and to enjoy his customary repose. About three o'clock, he may then again have to attend the public audience, especially if he has any official employment. If not, he rides out, or pays visits; or, if his rank should be too exalted, he stays at home to receive them. At four, he repeats the afternoon prayers.

When night comes on, the carpets are spread in the open air, and with either friends or dependents he prepares to pass the evening.

They converse on the events of the day, or the news of the court; they relate extraordinary adventures, and recite passages of their favourite poets. The kaleon supplies the intervals of silence. The hour for the fourth daily prayer arrives, but without causing any interruption to the flow of conversation or amusement. Each rises in turn, goes to a corner of the room, places himself on a small carpet with his face turned towards Mecca, and performs his religious service with so much greater dispatch than devotion, as significantly proclaims, "What a weariness it is," in his estimation, and as mere formal worship always must become.

About ten o'clock, a servant announces that supper (*shamee*) is ready. At the same time, he brings with him an ewer and basin, and in the fashion so often indicated in Scripture, he "pours water upon the hands" of each of the guests. The person holds out his hands, one under the other, and the servant pours water upon them from the long spout of his ewer, while the basin held underneath receives the water that falls from them. They then draw themselves around the tray on which the dishes are placed, and apply themselves to the food before them with much earnestness. About

eleven, the party breaks up, and the occupations of the day are ended. There remains, indeed, a prayer to be said in the middle of the night, but there is reason to believe that it is usually forgotten, for only three of the five daily prayers are deemed indispensable.

The Persians are too much taken up with etiquette and ceremony not to be fond of visiting. The dependent would not on any account allow a day to pass without paying his respects to his patron, the courtier without presenting himself before the prince, and friends without mutually visiting one another. The ceremonies and compliments differ with the rank of the visitor. Every one who visits is sensitively alive to the degree of attention to which he thinks himself entitled; and every one who is visited is careful to render neither less nor more consideration than the position of his visitor claims. If the visitor is a person greatly superior, the master meets him at the entrance to the court of the house; if considerably superior, at the entrance of the room; if an equal, he rises as he enters; but if an inferior, he merely makes the motion of rising.

If an inferior is honoured with a visit from a superior, he does not sit down till the latter is

seated, nor rise till he has risen. This, it will be seen, does not materially differ from our own customs—the natural dictates of politeness being much the same in all but the most barbarous nations. The master of the house usually occupies the upper end of the side carpet, near or at the right hand corner of the room—the corner being the seat of honour among all western Asiatic nations, as it was among the ancient Israelites, 1 Sam. xx. 25; Amos iii. 12; but if he wishes to do especial honour to his guest, he gives up his place to him, or desires him to take his place by his side. Ordinarily, when a Persian comes into an assembly, and has saluted the master and received his recognition, he marks with his eye the place in the line of guests to which he holds himself entitled, and proceeding straight to it, sits down and wedges his way in there, without offering the slightest apology for the general disturbance of the whole line which he produces.

It does not generally, but does sometimes, happen that a person takes a higher place than that to which he has any just claim. The Persian scribes are remarkable for their arrogance in this respect, in which, as in many *other* respects, they bear no small resemblance

to the Jews of the same profession in the time of our Lord. The master of the house has, however, the right of placing any one as high in the rank of the assembly as he may choose, and Mr. Morier mentions a remarkable instance of this at a public entertainment to which he was invited. When the assembly was nearly full, the governor of Kashan, a man of humble mien, although of considerable rank, came in and seated himself at the lowest place; when the master of the house, after numerous expressions of welcome, pointed with his hand to an upper seat in the assembly, to which he desired him to move, and which he accordingly did. These circumstances strikingly illustrate the parable which our Lord uttered, when, at a public entertainment, he noticed how carefully those that were bidden chose out the highest places for themselves, Luke xiv. 8—11.

The style of the complimentary phrases used on such occasions, and which are seldom varied, may be seen from the account which the Rev. Judkin Perkins gives of his interview with the governor of Oroomiah. "We found the governor occupying a splendid mansion, and surrounded by numerous attendants. He received us with much civility and apparent kindness. As we

entered the great hall, he beckoned us to the upper end, to sit by his side, and ran through a long string of inquiries after our health, in the usual Persian manner—*Kaef-üz yŏkhshée dŭr?* (Is your health good ?) *Dâmâghún châkh dur?* (Your palate—appetite—lusty ?) *Kaef-üz koek dŭr?* (Are you in hale—fat—keeping ?) etc.; and withal so rapidly that we found no room for some time to interpose a reply, and could merely nod our assent till he had finished. We then inquired after his health, to which, with a solemn stroke of the beard, he answered, *Alhémdooleelah*, (Thanks be to God.) *Sizín devletavüzdan*, (By your auspices.) *Sizín Ahvâlüz yŏkhshée ólsún, v' menimke yŏkhshée dŭr*, (Only let your condition be prosperous, and I am of course very well.) He then reiterated his expressions of welcome: *Hosh geldüz*, (Your coming is delectable.) *Sefa geldüz*, (Your arrival is gladsome.) *Güzum ústá geldüz*, (Upon my eyes, you have come,) etc. To divert the luscious tide, it was remarked that I came from the new world; but to this he replied, 'Everything must be superlative that comes from the new world,' and proceeded to lavish upon me and my country a copious shower of fine sayings of the like description."

The manner in which the Persians take their meals is very different from ours. They are strangers to the use of tables, knives, and forks; and such is the power of habit, that articles which we cannot dispense with are to them the most troublesome and inconvenient. Dinner in Persia, (or supper as some call it,) though the chief meal of the day, and of course, as in all countries, a matter of some consideration, is an affair of far less importance or duration than with us. Even when a prince gives a feast to his friends, the time of eating scarcely occupies half an hour. The guests sit on the felt carpet along one side, or at the top of the room, with their backs leaning against the wall; a long narrow strip of chintz, or coloured cotton, called *sofra*, (or, as we should say, table-cloth,) is spread before the whole party by two servants. The basins and ewers containing cold water are then produced to wash the hands, in the manner already described. Trays of tinned copper, termed *mujmuahs*, are brought in, each containing in general a dish of beautiful plain boiled rice, with another of some sort of pillaw—that is, with butter and meat, or vegetables, or both; one or two smaller dishes containing exquisite stews, to season the rice; some pickles, sweet-

meats, cut pieces of radish or turnip; a sort of omelette; a partridge or fowl stewed to pieces in some sweet or sour sauce; and one or two bowls of different sherbet; each having a long-handled carved pear-wood spoon floating upon it. One of these *mujmuahs*, thus laden, is placed usually for every two guests; and when all are thus served, the master of the feast, uttering the word *Bismillah!*—"In the name of God!" by way of grace, leans forward, and the meal begins.

The manner in which the trays are placed, one to every two guests, throws some light upon the circumstances of the dinner which Joseph's brethren ate with him and the Egyptians. "They set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves," Gen. xliii. 32, which, according to this method, might be done without too obviously invidious or offensive distinctions, seeing that the customary order of a feast required a tray to be set before two or three persons separately. This is no conjecture; for the paintings in the Egyptian tombs show that the custom of eating from separate trays, brought in full charged with the dishes, and set down, one before two guests, was also *the Egyptian* custom; and that the Egyptians

sat upon the floor, and fed themselves with their hands in the same manner as do the modern Persians.

It would seem, however, that the Egyptian fare was less than the Persian composed of stews and made dishes, and more of substantial joints, and of large birds dressed whole. This, perhaps, facilitated the operation mentioned in Gen. xliii. 34, "He took and sent messes unto them from before him;" which was a great honour according to the notions of a Persian, who cannot show to a guest a higher distinction than to order a particular dish to be taken from his own tray to that of the person he wishes to honour—or by giving a choice morsel with his own hands from a dish before him to anyone who is near enough to receive it. So sir James Sutherland, in his description of a dinner given to sir Harford Jones, writes: "It is considered at a Persian entertainment a compliment for a person to offer you a piece out of a dish that stands before him, which he does with his hands; and this you are expected to receive and devour with peculiar satisfaction—to do otherwise would be considered the greatest piece of incivility and rudeness, if not insult. Nasr Oollah Khan favoured the ambassador

with this unenviable mark of his respect; and the latter, with a coolness that surprised us all, set about eating it immediately." The custom was also the same among the Jews; and the reader will thus see the significance of the act of our Saviour in giving the sop to Judas when he had dipped it, John xiii. 26. It is clear, indeed, that at the last supper Judas was seated in an honourable place, whence he fed out of *the same dish* with his Master—for our Lord said, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me," Matt. xxvi. 23, which is perfectly intelligible according to Persian mode of feeding, where the two or three before whom each tray or set of dishes is placed, are constantly plunging their hands into the same dishes.

During the half-hour, or thereabout, which the meal occupies, the fingers of every one are busily employed in forming the *lugmehs*, or handfuls of rice mixed with other things, and which are conveyed towards the mouth, and jerked in, without spilling a grain of rice, or a drop of sauce, in a manner which a European cannot learn without much inconvenient practice. This labour is performed with diligent application and close attention,

only interrupted by occasionally taking a spoonful or two of sherbet. By-and-by, one or two arise from their stooping posture, or keep only trifling with their fingers, till the host erects himself, with an audible *Alhumdulillah !*— "Thanks be to God!" which is echoed by the company; for the Moslems *invariably* observe before and after meats, that decent acknowledgment to God, which too many who call themselves Christians altogether neglect.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSIAN CHARACTER.

Of the Persians, generally, it may be said that they are pre-eminent among the nations of the east for their intellectual qualities, while their moral character exhibits a compound of the most odious defects. It would be hard to deny them a sound understanding; and their possession of a quick imagination, a ready memory, and a happy capacity for the sciences, and the liberal and mechanic arts, has been universally acknowledged. Under the appearance of a proud indifference, they derive much information from the society of foreigners, and profit by their knowledge; they receive them kindly, patronize them, tolerate their religion, and seem generally to regard them with pity rather than with contempt. In illness and affliction they even solicit the prayers of Christians, whom they regard as infidels—which may,

however, more probably be ascribed to their superstition than to their toleration.

Elegant language is much affected by the Persians in conversation; and they are very proud of introducing quotations from the works of their most distinguished poets, so that their best talk is a kind of mosaic of poetical quotations. Nor is this confined to persons of rank and education; it is common to them and the dregs of the people, because those who have had no education, and cannot even read and write, take advantage of the readiness and retentiveness of their memories to learn by heart a great number of striking passages, which they omit no opportunity of producing in conversation, not always, it must be admitted, with the happiest effect. They are also very clever at irony and punning.

Endowed with a supple and intriguing disposition, they have agreeable manners, and extreme politeness; but this politeness is little better them a jargon of high-flown compliments and hyperbolical expressions, without sense or feeling. "Your presence has made all Persia a garden"—"Persia is unworthy of your acceptance," and such like expressions are specimens of this tendency to hyperbole

and exaggeration; and however impertinent it may seem to Europeans, the neglect of such kind of compliments would seem to the Persians an omission of the common forms of politeness. What major Scott Waring says of the people of Shiraz, is applicable in a considerable degree to the whole of the Persians—although it may be admitted that the people of the Shiraz districts afford full-blown examples of the common Persian characteristics. He says, "The people appear to me mean and obsequious to their superiors, and to their equals if they have a prospect of advantage, but invariably arrogant and brutal in their conduct towards their inferiors; always boasting of some actions they never performed, and delighted with flattery, although they are aware of the imposition. I have repeatedly heard them compliment a person, either in his hearing or in the presence of some one who would convey the adulation to his ears; and the instant that he has departed, their praises have turned into abuse, and they have with malicious pleasure exposed the character they have a moment before praised with fervent servility. Indeed, so loth are the Persians to admire anything from which they can derive no advantage, as

to confine themselves in their expressions of admiration to *Bad neest*, 'It is not bad;' but if the property be their own, no words or description can do justice to its excellencies."

This spirit of exaggeration and insincerity is not confined to their personal intercourse with one another; it insinuates itself into public affairs, as well as into the humbler relations between man and man. Not long after the arrival of the English embassy under sir Gore Ouseley, at Teherân, the confidential secretary of the grand vizier, accompanied by Meerza Abul Hassan Khan, who had been ambassador from Persia to the British camp, came one morning in great agitation to announce a victory gained by the prince royal over the Russians. Their account was, that the Persians had killed two thousand men, and taken five thousand prisoners, with twelve guns. The real truth was soon learned, which reduced their advantage to three hundred killed, two guns taken, and five hundred prisoners. On being questioned why they exaggerated so much, when they must be certain that the real facts must speedily transpire, the ready answer was: "If we did not know that your stubborn veracity would have come in the way, we should

have said ten times as much. This is the first time our troops have made any stand at all against the Russians; and you would not, surely, restrict so glorious an event in our history to a few dry facts."

A poet of Crete, quoted with approval by the apostle Paul, has left upon his people this character of infamy:—"The Cretans are *always* liars." It would seem incredible that this character, in all the emphasis of the expression, should be truly applicable to any people, had we not the Persians of this day to evince the possibility of this depth of degradation. To them it is applicable in the utmost force of its meaning. Philosophers have held it for a maxim, that the most notorious liars utter a hundred truths for every lie they tell. But this is not the case in Persia; the people are unacquainted with the beauty of truth, and only think of it when it is likely to advance their interests. The father of history reports of the ancient Persians, that from their fifth to their twentieth year, the children are instructed in the use of the bow, horsemanship, and a strict regard to truth. The last item of this statement has been quoted as a striking illustration of the difference between ancient and modern customs;

although it may be questioned whether the speaking of truth being so much a matter of formal instruction and acquirement, along with archery and horsemanship, does not in fact recognise the ancient existence of the national tendency to untruthfulness. Be that as it may, the Persians are not now even *taught* to speak truth. "There does not, I am ready to believe," says a recent missionary, "exist a country where society approaches more nearly to that (which moralists have sometimes imagined) of a community where truth is unknown, than in Persia; and the only reason why there does not exist a corresponding want of confidence, is, in good part, the inherent vanity of the Persians, which makes them willing to be deceived. I learned for myself, long before leaving the country, that my only security was, to act upon the supposition that every man was unworthy of trust." This, as he justly observes, is not merely the impression to which passing travellers reach, but is the settled conviction of old residents in the country, who have had much opportunity of knowing people in all conditions of life.

The same opinion he quotes as that of "a pious and intelligent gentleman, who had resided twelve successive years in the country,

who had travelled in every part of it, and had been conversant with all classes."—"I have never seen a Persian whom I found, on good acquaintance, that I could safely trust." "It is wonderful," proceeds Mr. Southgate, "with what facility most Persians utter a falsehood. It has often seemed to me like an instinct to them. They are fully conscious of the vice, and acknowledge that it prevails everywhere among them. They perpetrate it with the utmost indifference; and, on being detected, seem to have no shame, nor any sense of having done wrong. They practise it with the most astonishing hardihood. I have heard a Persian lie, and persist in it, even against the immediate evidence of my senses. They often do it even to their benefactors." After giving several examples of this, which any traveller in the country would extend without limit, this traveller adds: "The cause of this pernicious habit it is not difficult to trace. Some have attempted to explain it as a natural consequence of civil oppression. But this is not enough; for the same effect does not, in the same notable degree, flow from the same cause in Turkey. Its chief source is to be sought for in the native character of the Persians. Their imaginative-

ness of mind, and their love of the marvellous, may partly account for it in the instances of their wonderful relations. Their extreme affability and politeness, strange as it may seem, help to the same effect; for they will sometimes deceive for the mere sake of pleasing. Their vanity, also, and their love of self, are powerful auxiliaries; and their inordinate fondness for favour, gain, and emolument, leads them to make many false pretensions, and to resort to every species of trickery and fraud to serve the most trivial advantage. But that which lies below all these, and which is the root of all, is their want of conscientiousness"—a fearful indication of the depravity of the people.

As might be expected in this state of things, the Persians seek to gain credence by abundant oaths and affirmations, which, at last, from frequent use, have become little more than colloquial forms of expression, which serve chiefly to garnish speech. What we should call common swearing, is not considered a vice in Persia, nor indeed in any other eastern country; and, considering the class of men by whom such expressions are employed, it would almost seem that a man was considered the more religious according to the number of

oaths he uttered. Certain it is, that one who has been in the habit of living among people where every third sentence is an oath of affirmation, dwells with peculiar refreshment of spirit upon our Lord's injunction, "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil," Matt. v. 37. Yet, let it be said, that the oaths of these poor people, upon whom the light of the gospel has not shined, although more frequent, and heard in all classes of society, are not of that frightful character which disgrace the streets of a country calling itself Christian; and a Persian, or any other Moslem, would shrink with horror from that frequent invocation of eternal perdition upon themselves and others, with which our own people are so prone to pollute their lips and to dishonour God.

From the chapter of Matthew, just referred to, it appears that the Jews were in the habit of swearing by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their head. The oaths of the Persians, if not exactly the same, are of the same complexion. They swear less by Allah (that is, by God himself) than other Moslems, or even—it is grievous to say—than Christians; but substitute very much the name of Ali. "By the king's life," is a very solemn oath, as among the

ancient Egyptians, Gen. xlii. 15; "By the king's beard," was a very emphatic oath under the last king but one, whose beard reached to his girdle, and was held in great reverence by all his subjects; "By your head," is also one of the commonest, as is also such as, "By your happiness." The speaker also changes the person at his pleasure, affirming by the king's life, by yours, by his son's, as by that of your son, or his own son—and so of the rest, according to his pleasure. They also compliment a person by affirming by that which he is supposed to prize most highly. We remember the case of an English gentleman highly respected by the Persians, whose only child was a little daughter, and to whom persons of high consideration were in the habit of swearing, "By the blood of your daughter," and intended it, if not as a compliment, at least as a very high and strong affirmation.

From the Rev. Judkin Perkins's *Residence in Persia*, we derive an extract, illustrative of the hollow complimentary habits of the Persians. The Scripture illustration with which it closes had been given some years before in a well-known English commentary, and will be nothing the worse for the corroboration of an

independent authority. "In our flippant host we had a very fair specimen of Persian politeness in general. As he introduced us to our lodgings, he repeatedly declared that the whole house was no longer his but our own, and himself and all his family were our humble servants. Whenever we had occasion to ask for anything, he would respond, with a most submissive bow, and both hands covering his face, *Cheshmeh*, (My eyes for it;*) or, in Turkish, when he found we did not comprehend his Persian, *Bâsh-ûstâ*, (Upon my head;) *Corban olam*, (May I be your sacrifice.) If he did not understand us in any case, he would intimate it by a rising inflection of voice and obsequiousness of tone, peculiar to a despotic land, as though begging leave to be, *Bóoyoor, janum?* (Command me, my soul; that is, dear to me as my soul (life,) condescend to repeat your orders.) In attempting to make purchases of the Persians, as we had repeated occasion to make, on the road as also at other times, the article desired is always at the outset, *peishkush*, a present to you; and its owner your *servant* and your *sacrifice*. And if you request his terms, he reiterates the same assurance, until you strongly insist on his

* Rather, "Upon my eyes!"

naming the price, when he at length tells you, that since you will not take the article without paying him for it, you may set your own price, for he can *sell* nothing to *you*. Name a reasonable sum, and he will flatly reply that you shall not have it for that; and by this time his interest has got so much the better alike of his modesty and generosity, that he will demand twice or thrice its known value, which you must pay or take the trouble of bating him down. This is done by simply leaving him, as he will quickly call after you to take the article at the price you have offered. I know not how often I have in imagination stood by the side of Abraham, negotiating with the sons of Heth for a place to bury his dead, when I have been purchasing the most trifling article in Persia.

"As illustrating eastern manners, and these in turn throwing light upon Scripture, I may quote a part of the passage which records that celebrated transaction: 'And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered

Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the CHOICE of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.—And Ephron, the Hittite, answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field GIVE I thee, and the cave that is therein, I GIVE it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt *give* it me, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron said unto Abraham, My lord, hearken unto me, the land is *worth* four hundred shekels of silver; what is *that* betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver current money with the merchant.' This contract exhibits less formality than business transactions com-

monly possess in Persia at the present time. The bereaved patriarch was little disposed to be particular, in relation to the price he should pay for a place to bury his deceased Sarah; and his neighbours would not probably be apt, in these mournful circumstances, to do what was common in trade, or fully to develop their avaricious propensities. The general resemblance to Persian transactions, however, is very striking."

In fact, the Persians, in their conversation, use such extravagant and hyperbolical compliments on the most trifling occasions, that it would at first lead a stranger to suppose that every inhabitant of the place is willing to lay down his life, shed his blood, or spend his money in his service; and this mode of address, which in fact has no more real meaning than "your obedient humble servant" at the end of a letter, is observed not only by persons of the higher rank, but even among the humblest artificers, the lowest of which will make no scruple, on your arrival, of offering you the city of Shiraz, with all its appurtenances, as a *peishkush* or present. "On our journey, as well as at home," says Mr. Perkins, whose information on this point we can fully corrobo-

rate, "we frequently received presents, for which an extravagant sum is always expected in return. When the bearer approaches you, he will almost deluge you with a flood of fulsome compliments and expressions of devoted attachment, as a token of which he brings you the present, though he had never seen you before; and if you meet his wishes from your purse, he will leave you with the mellifluous stream still flowing, though a little checked, because, as he tells you, you have so mortified him by paying him anything that he can no longer look you in the face, and can scarcely utter a word; whereas, if you tender him only a fair price for the article, he will manifest the deepest displeasure, reject with disdain the proffered remuneration, and carry away his present, loading you with a copious measure of at least secret maledictions."

It often happens, however, that if the stranger be a person of wealth or influence, the man is really anxious to force upon his acceptance an article which he happens to admire or expresses a wish to purchase. But if he should be inconsiderate enough to accept it, he will not be long in discovering that by so doing he has given the person a claim either upon his good

offices or favour, or for a present of more than equal value in return.

Some travellers draw a distinction in this respect between the inhabitants of towns and villages, much to the advantage of the latter. Of this we hear, indeed, in *all* countries; but so far as our experience goes in different countries, (including our own,) this superiority of village character is not easily substantiated. It must be admitted, however, that in Persia the villagers are exempt from many of the influences which tend to produce much of the peculiar evils which have been noticed in the character of the townspeople, as well as from other influences which tend to call forth the brilliant qualities by which the latter are distinguished.

On this point it would be unjust to withhold the testimony of sir Harford Jones, whose opportunities of forming a correct judgment are undeniable. After an interval of many years, he passed, in high state as ambassador from the British crown, through a part of the country in which he had previously been known as an invalid in pursuit of health, as a merchant seeking to mix profit with pleasure, or as a fugitive from Shiraz: his impressions on the

way are thus recorded :—"There was scarcely one of these places at which I had not formerly made acquaintance with some of its inhabitants in the humbler walks of life; many of them had already gone to 'that bourne from whence no traveller returns;' but such of them as were still alive, invariably found some opportunity or other of visiting me in private; some of them attended by their children—all of them greeting me with the kindest expressions of regard and friendship, and uniformly bringing with them some little present. Some, for instance, brought a favourite kid; others, fresh butter made by their wives; others, cream cheese, or coagulated milk, of which the Persians make great use, under the name of *liban*."

After observing that a friend, who kept a journal at the time, notes all these visits, as proceeding from motives of interest, and not of friendship, and ascribing this to a want of a more intimate knowledge of the Persian peasantry, sir Harford says :—"Now I am bound to declare that there was not one of this class of visitors on whom I could prevail to accept a pecuniary return for the present he made. The general request was, for some-

thing to keep in remembrance of me—a knife, a penknife, or a pair of scissors. I hope the reader need not be told that I never accepted their favourite kid. I advert to these and such like trifling circumstances, in the hope that the disclosure of them may soften the injurious opinion formed by some persons of the Persian character, from the perusal of books, written by such as had only the opportunity of viewing them superficially, or of books written with the avowed design of amusing the idle, by the recital of absurd tales or extravagant caricature. . . . . He who attempts to make us believe that the inhabitants of cities in Persia, and the Persian peasantry, are in moral character the same, knows little or nothing of what he is talking about; and he who imagines that the Persian peasants of Fars, Irâk, Azerbijân, or any other province, all possess the same moral qualities, is equally ignorant. Even in this country, it is easy to perceive a distinctive difference in the manners, in the habits, and consequently in the character, of the peasants of different countries."

The Persian people generally, as regards their personal appearance, he described as a fine race of men. They are not tall, but it is

rare to see any of them diminutive or deformed, and they are in general strong and active. Their complexions vary from a dark olive to a fairness which approaches that of a northern European, and if they have not all the bloom of the latter, their florid, healthy look often gives them no inconsiderable share of beauty. As a nation they may be termed brave; though the valour they have displayed, like that of every other people in a similar state of society, has in a great degree depended upon the character of their leaders, and the nature of the objects for which they fought. Their vices are still more prominent than their virtues. Induced, by the nature of their government, to resort on every occasion to art and violence, they are alternately submissive and tyrannical. Many of the other various defects of their character may doubtless be accounted for in the same way; although we are not disposed to agree with those of their apologists, who account for all that is wrong in them from such causes. We find a deeper source in our fallen nature, which in the Persians affords that class of external manifestations which temperament, habit of mind, climate, a false religion, and, among other circumstances but not solely, a

bad system of government, may excite and impose. The fallen character of our race assumes in Persia merely one of those diversified aspects in which it is manifested in various countries—the same though different; and we must not be too ready in allowing travellers and historians to deprive us of the universal evidence of man's corruption, by referring every local or national manifestation of the universal disease to special causes and influences. But it is certain, that if we wanted to point out the one country in which more than in another, the grossest and least disguised evidence of man's fallen estate might be found, Persia is the country we should be disposed to indicate, and the Persians the people to whom we should be inclined to refer.

And yet there is much in the natural qualities and endowments of this people to justify the expectation, that in the coming time, for which we all sigh, when the abundant outpouring of the influences of the Holy Spirit shall have changed even this moral and social wilderness into a garden of God, the diadem of Persia will not be the least illustrious of the Redeemer's many crowns. It is certainly not the least of the advantages which we may derive

from the contemplation of the painful subjects which this little book presents to the reader's notice, that it may give a fresh impulse to the earnestness of our desires after, and the heartiness of our prayers for that day in which great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER V.

RELIGION.

It is well known that the ancient Persians were not, like most other nations, worshippers of images, which indeed they abominated as much as, under another religion, they now do, and as much perhaps as the Israelites themselves did. Their idols were the natural elements, and in particular the fire, as the purest and most characteristic symbol or representative of the God they worshipped. Hence their religion was free from many of the grosser absurdities, and, it may be added, from most of the viler atrocities, of which the apostle has left a most awful and striking picture in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. But it was not the less an idolatry. For, although some of the most instructed men might regard the fire only as a symbol of the Divinity, as they understood His character and attributes, it is certain that

the great body of worshippers suffered their admiration to rest upon the altar fires, which they deemed sacred, without caring to penetrate the hidden meanings which the learned assigned to that worship.

This superstition is not extinct. It is still cherished by those descendants of the ancient Persians who retained the old religion, and of whom almost two thousand families still linger in the country, under the name of Guebres, but who are found in greater numbers in India, to which their ancestors retired, and chiefly about Bombay, under the name of Parsees. The two centuries of subjection to the Arabian caliphs, which followed the famous battle of Nahavund, in A.D. 641, more than sufficed to establish the Mohammedan religion in Persia; and the religion which was thus established, and which prevailed for more than seven centuries in Persia, differed in no respect from that which was professed in all Moslem countries, the system by which they are at present so much distinguished from all the other adherents of the false prophet being the adoption of a later age.

It must be understood that the law and doctrine of those who may be called the

orthodox Moslems—as the Arabians, Turks, and others—are derived, first, from the Koran of Mohammed, and next, from his traditional sayings, which, as reported by his wives and companions, and as eventually expounded and reduced into a system by the four great doctors of the law, Haneefa, Malik, Shaffei, and Hanbal, became consolidated into one belief, which is called Sunnee; or, in other words, the belief of those who assent to the Sunna, or oral traditions, and who consequently acknowledge the first four caliphs, Abubekr, Omar, and Othman, from whom most of these traditions were derived, as the chosen companions and legitimate successors of Mohammed. These four saints or doctors above-mentioned, to whom the organization of the system of law and doctrine is owing, were, during their life-time, regarded as holy and learned men, and, after their death, were, in a certain sense, canonized as the four *Imaums*, spiritual heads, or high-priests of the established faith. The four sects or schools founded by them, have been denominated the four pillars of the Sunnee faith, and each of them has a separate oratory in the temple of Mecca; but this, and other formal distinctions, which they have preserved

as separate sects, have not disturbed their union, which has been cemented by the common alarm at the progress of schisms, that threatened by their prevalence, not only to alter the faith, but to overthrow the whole system of their jurisprudence, which was established upon authorities, the purity and legality of which the schismatics openly denied.

Among the chief of these schisms was that of the Sheahs, which has for three centuries and a half been the established religion of Persia. This name of Sheah means *heretic*, and was applied, in the first instance, by the orthodox believers to the separatists. The great and essential difference between the Sunnees and the Sheahs, is not, after all, in any matter of doctrine or ceremonial. It lies in the opinion which the Sheahs have inherited from the immediate partisans of Ali, that the celebrated man of that name had a Divine and indefeasible right to have succeeded to the caliphat on the death of Mohammed, which right descended to his heirs.

As the peculiarities of the religion of the Persians are based very much upon historical events, it will be necessary, briefly, to state these circumstances, in order to render the

details embraced in this volume more intelligible. For reasons which cannot now be ascertained, Mohammed abstained from giving any instructions respecting his successor. The legends which exist among the Persians, tending to show that he did nominate Ali, are entitled to no credit, as is admitted by many of the learned among themselves, who, however, urge that this proves that he considered the claims of Ali too manifest to be called in question. Indeed, Ali himself acknowledged before his death, that "the prophet" did not appoint any successor. On the other hand, the traditions adduced by the Sunnee, to show that Mohammed indicated Abubekr as his successor, by requesting him to conduct public prayers during his last illness, is as little entitled to credit; for it is inconceivable that if Mohammed had in any way indicated his wishes on the subject, they would not have prevented the unseemly contentions which arose on the very day of his death.

This contest at length became so violent as to threaten a violent rupture in the ranks of the Moslems. It was finally appeased by the prudence and moderation of Omar himself, one of the most prominent candidates. While

the strife was still warm, he advanced to Abubekr,* took his hand, and declared his allegiance to him, as the caliph or successor of Mohammed. This pacificatory act was followed by the others who were present, and Abubekr was chosen to the office by the united voice of the company. Ali was not there on this occasion, nor does it appear that his interests as a candidate were represented or supported by any one. But, when the result was announced to him, he made no attempt to conceal his dissatisfaction that his own claims had been overlooked. These claims consisted in his being by birth a cousin of Mohammed, and his son-in-law by the marriage of his only surviving daughter Fatimah. He was also the first, beyond the immediate circle of Mohammed's own household, who embraced the religion which he taught. These claims at the outset appeared so strong, that a considerable party adhered to him, and, even at this early period, the principles which have ever since been the essential grounds of difference between the Sunnees and the Sheahs, were distinctly

* The father of Mohammed's favourite and most powerful wife, Aayeshah, from whom he derives his historical name of Abubekr, "the father of the girl."

marked out. The party of Ali contended that the office of religious leader (including the temporal rule) was hereditary, and that their chief was entitled to it in right of his twofold affinity to the prophet. Their opponents, who constituted the great body of the Moslems, held, on the contrary, the opinion, that the succession must be determined by the voices of the whole company of the faithful. It may have been the same conviction, which seems in accordance with the equalizing principles of his religion, that induced Mohammed to remain silent with respect to the succession.

Not long after the appointment of Abubekr, Ali was, however, induced to declare his allegiance to the caliph, but it is generally supposed that neither he nor his followers were sincere in this transaction. When about to die, the caliph assumed the power of nominating his successor, and the person named by him was not Ali, but Omar, and the choice was confirmed after his decease, without opposition, the personal and public claims of Omar being, in fact, of the highest character.

Omar reigned about ten years, and then received a mortal wound from the hand of an assassin. In his last moments, he refused to

name any successor. Some mentioned his son, but he said that the responsibilities of the office were too great to be borne by more than one member of the same family; and, as to Ali, he said that he was not a sufficiently serious character to undertake so weighty a charge. All he could be prevailed upon to do, was to name a committee of six of the chief men among the Arabians, to whom the settlement of the matter should be referred after his decease. Ali was one of the six, and in the committee he did not hesitate to press his own claims. It is highly probable that the choice would have fallen on him, had he been willing to accede to the conditions proposed. These were, that he should govern in accordance with "the book of God," as they called the Koran, the traditions of the prophet, and the determinations of the two seniors. To the first two conditions Ali assented; but to the last he demurred. The "two seniors" probably denote Abubekr and Omar, who had preceded in the caliphat; and, as they had been the source of numerous traditions respecting the dicta of Mohammed, as well as of many interpretations of the Koran, and of decisions founded upon it, the electors would naturally desire to secure from

Ali a recognition of their authority; and his refusal, doubtless, laid the foundation for the principal heresy which the Sunnees charge upon the Sheahs, namely, the rejection of the traditions which rest upon the authority of the first caliphs.

On this determination of Ali, which was found to be unshaken, Othman, another of the six, was chosen caliph. He reigned nearly twelve years, and, at his death, the dispute about the succession was renewed with much increased violence. In the years that had passed, the cause of Ali had gained much strength. The Moslems began to see in his sons, now grown to manhood, the sole heirs and descendants of "the prophet;" and the great body of the Arabian people seems to have been at this time very much in his favour. His most inveterate adversary was Aayeshah, the before-mentioned wife of Mohammed, and daughter of Abubekr, who had all along taken a prominent part in public affairs, and was honoured with the title of "the mother of the faithful." She had from the first opposed, with the utmost virulence, the claims of Ali, partly, in the first instance, from the desire to see the office conferred upon her own father, and still

more from her jealousy of Ali's wife, Fatimah, who was daughter of Mohammed by his first and most beloved spouse, Kadijah. Her hostility continued to the end of her life; and, although it did not prevent him from at length attaining the caliphat after the death of Othman, it gave him much trouble in the possession of it.

By the time that Othman died, and the cause of Ali had become strong, that valiant and generous hero, then advanced in years, had lost all desire for the dangerous eminence to which he had once aspired, and would fain have declined it; yet it was literally forced upon him by the impatient zeal of his partisans, as well as from the cool judgment of many others, who hoped that this step would heal the divisions in which they saw much danger to the interests of Islam. But from the hour that he took up the staff of empire he knew not peace. The whole course of his reign was a storm and a conflict; and at length, like his two immediate predecessors, he fell by the blow of an assassin, while engaged in his devotions at the mosque. Ali was distinguished for his bravery; and the appellation of "Lion of God," which is still often connected with his name by the Persians

was conferred upon him for his many daring exploits, long before he attained the caliphat. He was, as compared with his contemporaries, noble and elevated in his views, and if he was not qualified to gain and secure favour, the deficiency arose chiefly from his superiority to the low acts by which power is too often won and sustained. He was a poet, and was accounted the most eloquent man of his time. Some of his writings are still extant, among which his Moral Lectures are the most distinguished.

It is not necessary to relate in detail the troubles of Ali's reign, which was incessantly disturbed by the rebellious movements of his domestic foes. His chief enemy was Moawiyah, of the family of Ommiyah, of the great tribe of Koreish, who held Syria under Othman, as his lieutenant, and who retained the rule in that quarter after the accession of Ali, and in despite of his power. Ali had fixed the seat of his government at Kufah, on the Euphrates, which thus became the centre of those who were true to his interests. Hence it arose that while the western provinces fell away from him, those of the east remained faithful to him.

After the assassination of Ali, (May 6th,

A.D. 661,) he was succeeded by his eldest son, Hassan, a man whose quiet and retiring spirit ill fitted him for the boisterous times in which he lived, and the bitter strifes in which he was involved. He held the reins of government not more than six months, and then resigned them to Moawiyah, who by that act became caliph, and founder of the dynasty of the Ammiades. Hassan perished ere long by poison; and his death is usually, but perhaps erroneously, ascribed to Moawiyah. His pretensions were inherited by his brother Hossein, whose character was very different from Hassan's, and had more resemblance to that of their father. When Moawiyah died in A.D. 680, his son and successor Yezid regarded his claims with jealousy and apprehension; and his letter from Damascus to the governor of Medina, announcing his accession, instructed him to seize the son of Ali, if he refused to acknowledge his right to the caliphat. The governor thereupon sent for Hossein to his house, informed him of Moawiyah's death, and invited him to declare his allegiance to his son Yezid. This Hossein evaded for the time, and managed to retire to his own house, whence he escaped with his family to Mecca, which was faithful to him.

He there received an invitation from the people of Kufah, the metropolis of Ali, with a promise of support in his claim upon the caliphat.

Relying on that promise, Hossein, despite the dissuasions of his wisest friends, set out for that place with his family and a small body of attached followers. But, before his arrival in that quarter, his principal friends at Kufah had been seized, and the manifestations in his favour put down with a strong hand by the emir Obeidallah, the caliph's governor in the Arabian Irâk, who took the most careful measures for the defence of the country. When the news of Hossein's approach arrived at Kufah, an officer name Harro was sent out with a thousand horse to meet him. He had orders to conduct him and his party to Kufah, but not otherwise to permit his advance. When Hossein heard these orders, he declined either to desist from his purpose or to submit, and commanded his men to continue their march. This was opposed by Harro, which provoked Hossein to answer him in the following terms, very much in use among the Arabs, "May your mother be childless of you!"* Harro fired at this, as the orientals always do at anything like

* Compare 1 Sam. xx. 30; xv. 33.

disrespectful mention of their mothers; but remembering who Hossein's mother was, he restrained himself from the usual recrimination, and said—"If any one else had treated me as you have done, I should not fail to recriminate—but there is no tongue that can speak of your mother without the highest respect." After this, he moved off his force, saying that he had no orders to fight with him, but only to conduct him to Kufah, and if he would go in any other direction he would meet with no opposition from him.

Hossein was resolved to push on to Kadeseh, a place lying nearer to Kufah, but not on the direct route. On the way, he learned the real state of affairs at Kufah, which might have taught him that his cause was hopeless. But he still went on; and by the time the governor was able to move out his forces against him, had reached Kerbelah, attended still by Harro watching his movements. The force destined to act against him, under Amer Ebn Saad, amounted to four thousand men, besides the one thousand already out under Harro—whereas Hossein's fighting men scarcely amounted to a hundred—thirty-two horse and forty foot. Before hostilities commenced, several

messages passed between the parties—and Hossein being now well aware that the Kufans had deserted him, offered to abandon his enterprise and return home; but this, or any other condition, was now refused, unless he would first acknowledge Yezid to be the true and only caliph of the Moslems.

Amer then proceeded to cut off the communications between Hossein's camp and the Euphrates, or rather with those branches of it called "the rivers of Kerbelah," whereby, as intended, his people were in that burning climate reduced to the most dreadful extremities from thirst, with refreshing streams before their eyes. This led to a conference between Hossein and Amer, attended by twenty men each, in the space between the two camps. But nothing came of it, as the governor of Kufah would not authorize Amer to accept any other terms than unconditional submission, or the decision of the sword; and at the same time he dispatched a reinforcement of five thousand men under Shamer. The governor also sent the offer of his protection to four sons of Ali in Hossein's camp, if they chose to separate their cause from their brother's; but they refused it, saying that "the protection of

God was better than that of the son of Somyah."

Amer being thus reinforced, and having received a reprimand for his dilatoriness, drew up his ten thousand men in order of battle, and advanced towards the camp of Hossein, which lay there before this great army like a small fold of sheep in the wilderness. It was then past the hour of evening prayer, and Hossein, who was in the tent with his brother Abbas, asked and obtained a truce till the following day. The night was spent in prayers and supplications, broken by the wailings of women—Hossein's sister and daughters—over the approaching doom of their brother and father, which their fears foresaw. At the break of day, both sides made the usual movements before a battle. Amer arranged his troops in battle array, and advanced to the camp to begin the attack. Upon this Hossein mounted his horse, and laying before him the Koran, which he vainly reverenced as the book of God, he conjured his soldiers, by all they held dear in this life and in the life to come, to attend him in the path of duty. This drew floods of tears from Hossein's sister and daughters, who rent the air with their lamentations,

upon which he sent his son Ali and his brother Abbas to pacify them, declaring that he would rather die on the field of battle than renounce his rights in the servile manner required. At this moving scene Harro, who has already been mentioned as one of Yezid's commanders, was so overcome, that he declared aloud his grief at having intercepted Hossein, and rode over to his side, followed by thirty of his men, declaring his determination to die with the grandson of "the prophet." A final effort was then made to mollify Amer; but he alleged that the orders he had received precluded all pacific measures —on which Harro upbraided him and all the Kufans with having imposed upon Hossein to his ruin, and reproached him with having deprived the heir of the prophet of the water of the Euphrates, which Christians, Jews, and Sabians were allowed to drink, and in which even swine and dogs might disport their unclean carcases.

Then, as usual in eastern battles, the fight began in single combats, see 2 Sam. ii. 13–17; 1 Sam. xvii. 23, in which the champions of Hossein performed such exploits, that Amer hastened to secure the advantage of his numbers in a general action. In this, also, the force of Hossein performed prodigies of valour.

But what could even the valour of despair avail against such fearful odds? At midday, although the battle had then become hot in all parts, Hossein performed his noontide devotions with great fervency, in the midst of the shattered remains of his little army—adding the prayer of Fear, which is never used but in the last emergencies of adverse fortune. The fight had already, in fact, been almost fatal to Hossein, who had lost his best men, and the greater number of his troops. The renewed attack made frightful havoc of the small remainder, and before evening scarcely any remained but Hossein himself, his little son Abdallah, and his nephew, also a child. The last had his hand struck off in the act of embracing his uncle, and was forthwith slain; and the little Abdallah was struck dead by an arrow while in his father's lap. All was then nearly over. Hossein received first a wound in the head, which filled his helmet with blood, and was afterwards shot in the mouth with an arrow while quenching his burning thirst. But he still continued to defend himself like a man impelled by despair—insomuch that no one of his enemies ventured for a time to give to the smitten lion at bay the last mortal blow.

At length his sister Zeinab made a desperate effort to save him, by asking Amer how he could have the heart to see Hossein slain. Upon this appeal, large tears were seen to run down his beard, and he turned his face away from her. But the other commander, who was of a more fierce temper, cursed and upbraided his men for not approaching Hossein; whereupon one advanced, and wounded him in the hand, another smote him in the neck, a third thrust him through with his spear, and he sank to the ground after having received thirty-three wounds, and thirty-four contusions. After he fell, his head was struck off, and the conquering soldiers rode over his body so often that it was trodden into the very ground. The head was the next day presented to Obeidallah the governor of Kufah, who struck it over the mouth with his staff, and treated it with much contempt.

The enmity with which this person had acted was, however, not approved by his master Yezid; who, upon the arrival of the express sent from Kufah to apprise him of what had happened, and to congratulate him on the success of his arms, is reported to have shed tears, and said, "May God refuse his blessing to the son

of Somyah for this! I should have been well pleased without the death of Hossein. Had he been with me I would have pardoned him. God loved Hossein, but did not suffer him to reach the dignity to which he aspired." So also, when the head of Hossein was brought to him, his compassion was much excited, and he cried out, "O Hossein, had it been in my power to save thee, thy life had not been lost!" We have no right to distrust the sincerity of the feeling thus expressed on the part of Yezid, to whom the Persians will not yield the credit of any capacity for generous emotions or compassionate sentiments. We the rather believe him sincere, from the fact that Hossein was a man whose high and noble qualities won the respect and esteem of many whose interests were adverse to his own. Innumerable anecdotes are current respecting him, in illustration of his character, and of his views and sentiments. Of these, we have room for only one, related by Yezdi in his treatise on Divine Love. Hossein one day asked his father, Ali, if he loved him: and when Ali answered that he loved him most tenderly, his son again demanded, if he loved God: and on his reply in the affirmative, Hossein said to him, "Surely

two loves can never meet in the same breast." Ali was so much moved at this, that he could not forbear shedding tears; when Hossein, touched by the impression his words had made, hastened to comfort him. He asked, "O my father, which would in my eyes be the sorest evil, my death, or the sin of infidelity?" And when Ali unhesitatingly replied, "Much as I love thee, my son, I would sooner yield thee up to death than abandon my faith in God;" Hossein promptly rejoined, "By this sign, then, it is clear that the love you bear to me is only a natural tenderness, but that your true love is given to God."

This brief historical statement will explain the ground which the Persians take in their distinctive system of faith. They are the successors of that party by which, ever after the abdication of Hassan, and the martyrdom (as they regard it) of Hossein, the claims of Ali to have succeeded Mohammed in the caliphat, and to have transmitted that honour through his children, the sole descendants of "the prophet," were constantly upheld. Believing this, they execrate the memory of the caliphs who preceded Ali, whom other Moslems regard with the highest respect; and they consequently

refuse any credit to the traditions that come through him.

Ali's claims, they assert, rested on his nearness of kindred to Mohammed, of whom he was the cousin, and on his having married Fatimah, the only offspring of "the prophet." They also affirm that he was expressly nominated by Mohammed as his successor, and that those by whose intrigues he was deprived of his inheritance, acted in direct contradiction to the will of God, as signified through his servant; and that hence the three caliphs who preceded Ali, instead of being worthy of the honour in which they are held by the orthodox, could only be regarded with abhorrence and indignation, and the traditions coming through sources so polluted could not be received as of any authority or value. As this invalidates a great portion of the expository law which the orthodox held in equal regard with the Koran itself, a very serious and radical ground of separation arises out of what appears to be, at the first glance, no insuperable matter. The difference is something, in this respect, like that between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, though there are no such doctrinal differences as subsisted between these two sects; and the Sheahs do

not, like the Sadducees, reject all traditions, but only such as come through what they regard as a corrupt source. Traditions which can be traced to Ali and his friends they receive.

We have related in some detail the circumstances of Hossein's death, on account of the great prominence which, second only to that of Ali, the Sheahs assign to him among their twelve imaums. This is difficult to account for, unless, as Mr. Southgate remarks, "it has arisen from the tragical representation of his death, which itself may have been contrived in the first place merely for a temporary purpose, and to have gradually extended to an annual and universal observance. The effect of this frequent and touching commemoration, (which we shall have occasion to describe,) would naturally be to excite a spirit of enthusiastic reverence for the martyr who died by the hands of his enemies. And so it is. His sepulchre at Kerbelah is the principal object of religious pilgrimage. His name is heard as often from the lips of a Persian as that of Ali. There is no excellence which he is not supposed to have possessed—no virtue which he did not exemplify. This enthusiasm,

if it does not arise from, is preserved and quickened by, the yearly celebration of his martyrdom, in like manner as the simple act of commemorating our Saviour's death is the most efficient means of strengthening the fidelity and love of his disciples."

At the first view it might seem that the succession of Ali to the caliphat would have satisfied the expectations of his adherents, and would have extinguished the feelings which had been generated by his undeserved exclusion. But this was not the case. It was considered that the children of Ali were the sole descendants of Mohammed, and his adherents contended that the same high temporal and spiritual power which should immediately have descended to Ali, ought to have been the heritage of those who sprang from him. His death, and the tragical end of his sons, with the misfortunes of descendants, (who, although admitted to the rank of imaum, or chief priest, were excluded from all temporal power,) led many to cherish in secret the principles of this sect, and to mourn over the hard lot of those whom, as the direct descendants of Mohammed, they regarded as the first of men.

Of these imaums there have been twelve, of whom Ali himself is counted the first, and Mehdi the last. To all of them qualities and powers corresponding to the nobleness of their origin are ascribed. Supernatural knowledge, perfect holiness, and the power of working miracles, are amongst the attributes which are ascribed to them. Mehdi, the twelfth and last imaum, was but five years old when he succeeded to the imaumat, and he disappeared at the age of twelve years. The Sunnees and the Sheahs somewhat differ in their views concerning him. The former consider that he is destined to appear again towards the end of time, to summon all the nations of the earth to the knowledge of Islam. It is added that three hundred and sixty heavenly spirits will assist him in this mission, and that he will act as the vicar of Jesus Christ in the imaumat. The Sheahs, on the other hand, entertain the opinion, that the imaum Mehdi still dwells in the world, living unknown of men in some sequestered cave. His return is the object of their wishes and expectations; for they hold that he is to recover the rights of his house, to establish a universal caliphat over the whole

earth, and to bring all men to the true faith—as is indicated by the name of Mehdi, or Director, which he bears.

Who does not see in these notions respecting the reappearance of the imaum Mehdi, a blasphemous misappropriation of the expectation of the Christian church respecting the establishment of our Lord's kingdom over the whole earth, and of his reappearance hereafter, "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," 2 Thess. i. 10. Indeed, if we were to discriminate nicely, it might seem as if the Sunnee notions were more founded on this expectation; and the Sheah notions more upon the expectation which the Jews entertained, and do still entertain, respecting the Messiah's coming.

Now, it was through the accession to the throne of Persia of a descendant of one of these twelve imaums—the seventh, named Moossah Kazim—that the Sheah system became the established creed of Persia. This descendant was Shah Ismail, all whose ancestors up to the imaum had been regarded as holy men, and some of them as saints. They had long been settled at Ardebil, where they lived as retired devotees, that they might attract disciples, and

acquire that fame which they pretended to despise. The first of the family who attained to any signal reputation was Sheik Suffee-u-deen, from whom the dynasty took the name of Suffavean. He was succeeded by his son Sudder-u-deen, whose reputation for sanctity was so high, that contemporary kings visited his cell. Among them was the great conqueror Timûr Beg, better known in Europe as Tamerlane, who demanded to know what favour he could bestow upon him—"Release those prisoners you have brought from Turkey," was the noble request of the recluse. The conqueror consented; and the grateful tribes which thus recovered their liberty, declared themselves the devoted disciples of the man to whom they were indebted for it. Their children preserved as sacred the obligation of their fathers; and the descendants of the captives of Timûr became the chief supporters of the family of Suffee, and eventually enabled the son of a devotee to ascend what was then one of the most splendid thrones in the world. "History," says Malcolm, "does not furnish us with a better motive for obedience, or a nobler origin of power."

When Ismail ascended the Persian throne in

1492, the seven Turkish tribes with other adherents, by whose aid he had risen to this eminence, formed a considerable body professing the Sheah faith, which was soon adopted by the whole nation, and became the established religion of the country; and the Persians speedily learned to regard with hatred the opinions which they had themselves formerly held. This was the source of the animosity which sprang up between the Turks and the Persians, and which has been the cause of many bloody wars between them. The abhorrence with which the Sheahs regarded those who upheld the claims of the men who persecuted the sacred family of Ali, is well repaid by that with which the Sunnees regard those who defame the great names they are accustomed to mention with reverence—and, being aggravated by mutual charges of unsound and infamous tenets, at length reached such a pitch, that these kindred religionists learned to look on each other with far greater dislike than men of an entirely different religion. Reciprocally, the Sunnees and Sheahs have shown that they regarded their opponents as entitled to less consideration than even Jews and Christians, and have even questioned

whether the very idolaters were not better than they.

The hold which the romantic history of Ali and his sons took upon the imaginations of the Persians; the seductive influence of that man-worship, of which Ali became, in some sort, the object; and the force of that vigorous hate with which they had so long been accustomed to regard the Sunnees, in the course of time settled into fixed habits and conclusions, the force of which was little understood by Nadir Shah, when, for the advancement of his political objects, he strove to bring about a uniformity of faith. When that remarkable man had contrived that the crown should be offered to him, he accepted it only on the condition that the Sheahs should in future abstain from publicly anathematizing the first three caliphs, and that they should discontinue the festivals they had been in the habit of celebrating in honour of Ali and his unhappy sons. It may be easily conceived that it was not philanthropy or humanity which made this ferocious conqueror a preacher of moderation, and which at one time induced him to argue the matters of difference in full conclave with the doctors of the law. His object was, to conciliate the

Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmans, who composed the greater part of his army, and to pave the way to the more easy conquest of Turkey, by removing the causes of religious animosity. He, however, thwarted his own object, by pressing it too sharply, and by making the great mistake of supposing that new points of faith might be settled by coercion, and that it was not more difficult to rule consciences than to govern men by force of arms. In the end, he incurred the hatred of his subjects, shook the foundations of his own power, and at length perished, without having realized the least success in this design.

When we reflect upon the facility with which the Persians adopt foreign customs, even from those they have overcome ; and when, in particular, we consider the ease with which they received the Moslem religion from the Saracens, and, in a later age, the Sheah system of belief from Shah Ismail, we may be the more impressed by the tenacity with which they held to their faith on this occasion. We know not what further change there shall be among this people, until that day—oh, that it were come !—in which they are folded with Christ's sheep, and live

upon his pastures. A glance thrown forward, in faith, to that time—which is surely coming, though they dream not of it—often cheered our own hearts, in witnessing much that we now describe; and seemed to create a kind of brotherly interest in a people who present many fine qualities, overshadowed by much evil.

It is not our object to describe the Mohammedan religion, which is professed by many other nations besides the Persians. We must rather confine our notice to what is peculiar to them, and serves to distinguish them from others who hold the Moslem unbelief. But these peculiarities are almost entirely such as grow out of their appreciation of the high claims of the family of Ali; for, in doctrine and in ceremony, there is little to distinguish them from other Moslems. A slight variation in the mode of holding their hands, and of prostrating themselves in prayer, is the chief visible distinction; and, as a distinction, is somewhat analogous to the different modes of making the sign of the cross in the Roman Catholic and the Greek churches.

But it is Ali who is the central point of the Sheah religion—the person who, by the ortho-

dox Moslems, is treated with decent respect, is, in the Persian system, exalted unto heaven. It is an article of their faith, that Ali was the lieutenant of God. In an axiom which is very common among them, they demonstrate the respect in which they hold him — "Mohammed is a city of knowledge, and Ali is the gate thereof." It is under the impression conveyed by this metaphor, that they ascribe to him and his descendants a vast superiority to the rest of mankind in virtue and in knowledge. A learned Sheah doctor said, in an answer addressed to Henry Martyn, that the number of expressions in the Koran which could be understood perfectly was extremely small, and that the greater part of the things contained in that book were comprehensible only by the prophet himself and his descendants. One half of this —the part which characterizes the Koran—is certainly true.

The more educated class of Sheahs allow a great difference between Mohammed and his son-in-law; and, although they regard Ali as the legitimate successor of their prophet, they are far from looking upon him as his equal. But, in popular opinion, no bound is set to the veneration and fanaticism of which Ali is the

object. He is exalted above human nature, to him miracles are ascribed, and almost Divine honours are rendered to him. How they also venerate the chief line of his descendants, the Imaums, has been already shown. Fatimah, the sole child of Mohammed, and wife of Ali, they venerate as a saint; and through this appreciation of her, a woman figures in the Sheah system with honours otherwise unknown to Islamism.

Like other Mohammedans, the Persians hold the unity of God in such a sense as precludes them from acknowledging a plurality of persons in the Godhead; and the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ (whom they otherwise respect) they reject with abhorrence, and regard Christians as idolaters and polytheists for holding it, and for making Him an object of worship. In fact, the Mohammedan declaration of faith, "There is no God but God, who neither begetteth, nor is begotten," is, and was designed to be, a standing protest of Islam against this most essential doctrine of the Christian faith, without which that of man's redemption were a shadow and a dream. The fact that Mohammedanism publicly, three times a day, raises its voice against this doctrine,

places that system of religion in a truly peculiar and awful condition. Moslems are not like the heathen, who are ignorant of the doctrine of Christ; they are acquainted with it, and knowingly and nationally, from day to day, they protest against its most essential principles, and reject them as abominable. This, as we are assured from experience, forms a great discouragement to missionary exertions among Mohammedans, whether they be Persians, Turks, or Arabians.

The Persians make quite as much account of ceremonial purification by washing as do other Moslems, and as did the Pharisees of old. The principle of such purification is thus laid down: "The body appears before God as well as the soul; it must, therefore, be cleansed from all stain previous to the performance of any religious act." There seems nothing to object to in this—and a similar practice of cleansing the body from impurity before taking part in Divine worship, was sanctioned by the law of Moses, from which indeed the Moslem practice seems to have been borrowed. But the tendency of the mind to rest upon external observances has here, as among the Jews, been manifested in the multiplication of objects which render a person unclean, and in the carrying

the scruples respecting legal purity to such lengths, that a strict and scrupulous man might occupy a third of his time in acts of purification. This religion lies so much more than even that of the Jews in "meats and drinks, and divers washings," Heb. ix. 10, as to become quite as burdensome as the Jews had rendered the ceremonial law of Moses in the time of Christ. So very oppressive indeed is it, that the courage and patience of self-righteousness—its strong shoulders and iron sinews—could alone be sufficient to sustain them; and it is, perhaps, necessary to witness these things to realize the full sense of the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Every other religious system, however cunningly devised, is a slavery and a burden—nor is there any other in which a shadow of freedom for the soul can be found. Among the Persians, men whose conduct in life affords no evidence of any kind of religious or moral principle, are often found to be the most scrupulous in their ceremonial purifications; and it is scarcely possible to live a day among this people without having occasion to realize a most vivid recollection of our Lord's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees—"Woe unto you, hypocrites!

for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess," Matt. xxiii. 25.

The Moslems like the Jews, Lev. xv. 13, prefer performing their ablutions at running waters, and when this is inconvenient or impracticable, care is taken that the water used shall so far run in the application that the same water shall not be twice applied to their persons. In the absence of running water, still water may be used; in the absence of clean water, foul water; and in the absence of any water, dust, sand, ashes, and even dried dung, may be rubbed over the party requiring ablution. It may, therefore, be easily conceived that these ablutions do not in all cases contribute to personal cleanliness.

There is no people who carry the pharisaical washing of "cups and pots," Mark vii. 4, to the same extent as the Persians. Even as a strict Jew could not enter the house of a heathen, or partake of his food, without pollution—so neither does any Persian, who has regard for his religious character, partake of the food, the cup, or the pipe of a Christian or of any one of those he regards as an infidel—that is, of any *who are not* of his own faith. This, however,

does not so much, so far as we were ever able to learn, arise from any conception that your *religion* in itself renders you unclean, as from the belief that your habitual use of food and drink which his law teaches him to regard as unclean and defiling, has imparted to you, as it would to himself, a personal uncleanness, which is transmitted to all you touch, so far as to render it unfit for their food. The Turks, though a much less tolerant people, lay comparatively little stress upon these matters, which engage the chief solicitude of the Persians. A Turk will not refuse to partake of a Christian's food, while he has reason to know or believe that it *contains* nothing unclean; nor will he hesitate to drink from the same cup that a Christian's lips have touched, or even to drink the remainder of what he may at table have left in his glass. We remember to have been so often annoyed upon journeys in Persia, in seeing persons breaking the earthen vessels from which we had drunk, or in vigorously scouring those of metal or of wood which had been defiled by contact with our impure lips, that we provided ourselves with a cup of tinned copper, in which to receive from their vessels the draught of water we had sometimes occasion to solicit. So also, when a

Persian has received a Christian into his house, there will follow a general purification of all the metal vessels, and a breaking of all those of earthenware which he may have used in drinking or in the preparation of food.

The following remarks of Mr. Southgate, on this subject, we can corroborate from our own observation: "It is in this particular of the ceremonial uncleanness of a man of another religion that the Persians differ most widely from the Turks—most widely, I mean, so far as regards those things which meet most frequently the observation of the traveller. On this point, the Persians generally receive opinions and practice from education. Their religious directions are most minute concerning it even to indecency. There are many, especially among men in public stations, who are entirely neglectful of such precepts, and they are strictly followed only by the religious orders and the common people. Among the former they are doubtless mingled with bigoted feelings, and regarded in a very serious light. Among the latter it was a mere matter of unthinking imitation. They are strict in some points, and neglectful in others. They are careful to avoid the most prominent and notorious unclean-

nesses, while they are continually polluting themselves with those which, though of less importance, are equally forbidden. A servant sometimes will not eat of a dish of which his Christian master has partaken, and yet he will suffer himself to be rendered religiously impure in a thousand other ways. These notions, therefore, should not be considered as indicative always of bigotry, or even of sincere attachment to Islamism. There are many who rigidly practise this who can boast no other religion, besides those who never perform the stated prayers, or observe any other precept of their faith."

It might be supposed that this keen sense of the uncleanness of those who are nŏt of their own religion, would have the effect of making them less tolerant of their presence. But this is not the case. There is no Moslem power in Asia which allows so much freedom of hand and tongue to others as do the Persians. In Turkey, and especially in Roumelia, a Christian subject would be punished with death who should dare to lift his hand against a Moslem. But in Persia, the Christian enjoys almost as much freedom as the lower class of Moslems themselves. He may complain if insulted, and

may defend himself if smitten, and sometimes does both with much effect.

We may cite an anecdote or two in illustration of this important difference between the Persians and all other Moslems. From this it will appear that the naturally tolerant temper of the Persians receives all encouragement from the government, and that less from political motives than from a principle of justice. The first is a circumstance that happened in the early part of this century in the province of Azerbijân, then under the government of Abbas Meerza, heir apparent of the king who at that time reigned, and father of the monarch now upon the throne. One day, in the month of January, 1807, a Persian belonging to the household of the prince, thought fit to insult publicly an Armenian merchant in the city of Tabreez, and to grossly revile him, for no other reason than the difference of their religions, the Armenian being a Christian. Not content with personally affronting the Christian merchant in the most outrageous manner, the man launched out into the most atrocious abuse of Christ himself, his gospel and his cross.

These blasphemies so aroused the indignation

of the Armenian, that he could contain himself no longer, but laid violent hands upon the aggressor, mauled him severely, and left him extended upon the ground. The man, covered with dirt and blood, presently got up, and went to the palace of the prince his master, to prefer a complaint against the Armenian merchant by whom he had been so roughly handled. He took good care, however, to suppress the real cause of the quarrel, and interlarded his story with many false allegations against the merchant. The prince had too much penetration, and understood his countrymen too well not to discover, in the circumstantial details which the man gave, grounds for suspecting the truth of his statement. He therefore determined to hear the matter in full divan. The Armenian was summoned to allege what he had to say in his own defence, and those who had witnessed the fray were called to give their testimony. After hearing the declaration and the evidence, the divan was convinced that the Persian had, without provocation, attacked the Armenian, by his blasphemies against Christ, and that the other had for this cause only, inflicted chastisement upon him.

With a view to prevent similar offences in

future, and to satisfy the minds of the Christians resident in the country, the prince determined that the decision in this case should be given under the sanction and authority of his recognised guardians of the Mohammedan law. He therefore convened a divan, composed of the sheikh-ul-islam and the principal ulemas of his city, and proposed the following questions, which he required them to answer :—

1. "Was the Lord Jesus (*Hazreti Issa*) a real prophet of God?"

Ans. "Yes."

2. "Are the laws contained in his noble gospel (*Indjilisherif*) just or not?"

Ans. "They are just."

3. "Is it permitted by our laws to blaspheme the Lord Jesus and his noble gospel?"

Ans. "No: it is not permitted."

Upon these unanimous decisions of the ulemas, the prince ordered the merchant to be set free, and his own servant to be punished with a hundred strokes of the bastinado, and he further dismissed him from his service. This was intended as a warning to those who should be disposed to insult the professors of the Christian faith; it made at the time a strong impression, and had a most salutary

effect. But one cannot reflect upon it without lamenting that those who were thus prepared to treat Jesus with respect, could not see in him not only "a prophet," but a Redeemer, and in his "noble gospel," not only "a just law," but a message of salvation and eternal life to a ruined world, to be received by faith.

The other anecdote is this :—In April, 1815, the neighbourhood of Teherân, the metropolis, was visited by a most extraordinary drought. The sheikh-ul-islam of that city conceived that he was performing an action well pleasing to God and the king, in leading the populace to believe that the drought, and the consequent dearth of the productions of the soil, formed a punishment inflicted upon them for permitting the city to be polluted by the presence of the wine stores kept by the Armenian Christians. The people were at length so excited that they proceeded in a large body to the quarter inhabited by the Armenians, and, in the presence of the sheikh, pulled down one of the churches, and demolished the houses of several dealers in wine. Considering that the use of wine is strictly forbidden by the Moslem law, there was certainly some just cause of displeasure that the permitted use of it to the Christians

afforded facilities by which Moslems were seduced into transgressions of their law. But we quote the anecdote for the sake of the lesson of toleration which grew out of it—and certainly nothing could justify the riotous course taken on this occasion, by those whose craving for the forbidden drink created the supply of and trade in the liquor, which the Christians would otherwise have kept only for their own use.

The king heard of it, and was much incensed. He sent for the sheikh-ul-islam, and the chief of those who had acted upon his instigations. "Audacious wretches!" he said, "who commanded you to do this deed? What law authorizes such proceedings? Is the sheikh-ul-islam your sovereign, and the ruler of this country? You have violated the laws of my dominions, and by them I condemn you! Depart from my presence." The legal penalties were immediately enforced; and the culprits were obliged to pay the Armenians a penalty of a thousand tomans (five hundred pounds.) The king then sent for the principal persons among the Armenians: "It is my wish," he said to them, "that all my subjects, of what religion soever they be, should enjoy a just liberty and

live unmolested under the protection of my royal authority." He then promised to inflict condign punishment upon the sheikh-ul-islam, and exhorted them to pray to God for the preservation of his life. At the same time, he ordered his treasurer to pay to these persons the sum of three thousand tomans, (£1,500,) as some compensation for the injury the Christians had sustained. He moreover commanded that the church which had been demolished should be rebuilt at the expense of government, and that restitution should be made for such furniture or effects as had been damaged or destroyed.

In general, a Turk or an Arab will not willingly enter into a discussion on the doctrines of his own religion with a Christian, nor will he allow a word against them, or in disparagement of them, to be uttered. But it is not so with the Persians. They not only tolerate, but enjoy, discussions on their own tenets, and on the relative merits of Islam and Christianity; and they will say themselves, and allow those whom they regard as infidels to say, whatever they please on the points of their belief, or the persons whom they venerate. Many stories are current of the latitude which they allow them-

selves on such matters. The following is not a bad specimen:—A mollah, preaching one day in a mosque, dwelt strongly upon the examination which the deceased have to undergo from the angels Nekyr and Monkyr, as soon as they are deposited in the tomb. "Don't believe a word of it!" cried one of the congregation, "for one of my slaves died a few days since; I filled his mouth with rice, and, on digging him up again to-day, the rice was just as I left it. Now, it is morally impossible for a man to give answers, even to angels, with his mouth full."

It is a great matter to one who feels impelled to declare the gospel of Christ, to find a Moslem people willing to hear him, and to argue the matter with him. This is considered a great encouragement, and will be apt to awaken expectations which, if seldom other than disappointed, have at least the satisfaction that the word of God has been proclaimed. No immediate results may be seen, yet that word will not return unto Him void, but will assuredly prosper in the thing whereto he sends it—although that thing may not be the one we had immediately in view, and the frustration of which may make us too readily conclude that we have

laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought. There are several causes which excite this readiness to hear, or rather to discuss, on the part of the Persians—such as a love of disputation, and the desire of triumph in argument, which everyone expects when he begins a controversy—a curiosity to know the peculiarities of other religions, and to know what those who profess them can allege in their defence—a laxity of mind, bordering often on freethinking, which makes them not unwilling to hear what can be alleged against their own religion, though from habit they adhere to it, or cannot find sufficient inducement to abandon it publicly for another—and, lastly, a wish to make themselves agreeable, especially when they have some object to gain.

With reference to the love of disputation, it must be understood that the educated Persians are very subtle reasoners; and as the preaching of the gospel to the poor and uneducated would be certain to bring about, ere long, a controversial interview with the learned doctors of the Sheah faith, a very peculiar class of qualifications would be required of the missionary in that country. He would, in fact, need a special training in all the intricacies of Persian

dialectics, to preserve himself from being surprised in argument, and brought to a point which will insure his defeat in the eyes of those whose opinions he controverts, and thereby subject himself to the mortification and the terror of feeling that he has exposed to apparent damage, through unskilful defence, the cause he has laboured to support, and which he knows to be true. There are but two courses—either to enter the field well furnished with the peculiar weapons of this warfare, or to avoid all these discussions, declaring simply the truth of Christ, and meeting all cavil and objection with the authoritative, "Thus saith the Lord." This course has often been blessed of God, when the results of the most subtle controversies have proved abortive.

The openness which results from the desire of information, we have not seen more strikingly illustrated than in the interesting life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, a very learned Persian, who died, at an advanced age, in 1779. He relates that, during the studies which engaged his mind in early life, he became anxious to inform himself on the questions and truths of different religions, and concerning the followers

of the various sects. "I became intimate with the doctors of the order of Christians, and their *padres*, who were a numerous body at Isfahan, and tried and measured the quantity of knowledge in each of them. One held pre-eminence among them, and they called him the caliph Avanus.* He knew Arabic and Persian well, and was versed in logic, astronomy, and geometry. Some Mohammedan books had undergone his perusal, and he had a great wish to investigate several of their questions and propositions; but from fear, and through the utter disrespect of the Moslem doctors for his order, he had been unable to attain his object. He esteemed my society a great acquisition, and when, after a while, he had become acquainted with my character and just discretion, he showed me very great sincerity and friendship. From him I learned the gospel, and, obtaining access to their commentaries upon it, I thoroughly investigated their articles of faith and the principles of their religion, and read a great number of their books. He also, sometimes,

* It is the Armenians who are thus numerous at Isfahan, and this caliph Avanus was, probably, one of their principal teachers.

asked information from me, and I repeatedly, by various arguments, proved to him the truth of the Mohammedan faith. Not having a word to say in reply, he stood convinced of the error of his way, but he died without having openly received the grace of being directed in the straight road of salvation." This was *his* inference, the fact being, probably, that the poor man was no match for this accomplished Moslem in the arts of logic and disputation, who was thus left in the conviction that he had silenced, if not convinced, one who, so far as appeared to him, was the ablest champion of the Christian doctrine.

The Sheikh then proceeds to afford us further information respecting his researches in the religion of the Jews, as well as of the Moslem sects. He says: "Among the Jewish inhabitants of Isfahan, who, as they believe, have, since the time of Moses, been dwellers in that town, there was one named Shoaib, the most learned of his brethren. I gained his confidence, and took him to my house. I learned from him the Bible, had the interpretation of it written for me, and informed myself of the truth of all that they maintain. But

I found that order of men totally destitute of knowledge and learning, and entire strangers to thought and discernment. Their stupidity and obduracy in ignorance are without end or measure.

"I acted in the same way with regard to the varieties of the Mohammedan faith. I read the books of every sect, and considered what each had to say, discreetly and anxiously remarking on their arguments. Wherever I found a person belonging to any sect who was knowingly attached to his own religious opinions, I frequented his society, and made myself acquainted with his views and discourses. In this way I had much conversation with the followers of different opinions."

The Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin was not singular in his wish to acquaint himself with the doctrines of the Christians and the Jews. A few years after this time, the king himself, Nadir Shah, on his return from the conquest of India, conceived a desire to obtain a translation of the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospels. He accordingly sent a mollah, or doctor of the law, to Julfa, (the Christian suburb of Isfahan,) with the charge to

assemble the Jews, the Armenians, and the Franks,* and arrange with them the measures necessary for this work. The mollah confided the translation of the books of the Old Testament to the Jews, and those of the New Testament to the Armenians and the European (Roman Catholic) missionaries. The translation was commenced in the month of May, 1740. The mollah seems to have rendered much assistance in the task. With him co-operated two of the missionaries, two Catholic Armenians, and two monks and two priests of the "schismatic Armenians," as the Roman Catholics call all those who have not conformed to the principles of the Roman church. We are told that every word was carefully examined, and the true sense was sought with solicitude, as well as the terms by which it might be best expressed in the Persian language. The diversity of sentiments among the translators often gave birth to different interpretations, between which it was left for the Mohammedan mollah to arbitrate.

The Roman Catholic reporter of this inte-

* Members of the Jesuit mission to Persia—from a letter of one of whom, in the *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*, these particulars are taken.

resting transaction says: "The passage in which Jesus Christ gives the pre-eminence to Peter was very warmly discussed. The Armenians alleged that the words, 'Thou art Peter,' etc., signified that whoever confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, were entitled to participate in the high privileges which this glorious confession obtained for Peter." This just view of the Armenians, badly reported by the Romanist opponents, was contested by the missionaries, who, as might be expected, describe the mollah as astonished at this interpretation, and pointedly demanding of "brother Duhan," whether the Franks held the same view of this passage. But it did not consist with the views of this person to inform the Moslem doctor that there were many Franks who did hold a view of the passage not materially different from that which the Armenians had advanced. He proceeded to expound the Romanist interpretation, which, says the reporter, "he found to be so natural and obvious, that he imposed silence upon the schismatics." He adds: "We had the consolation of seeing that in all these contestations the Mohammedan, guided by the light of reason alone, decided in favour of the Catholic explications, which to him appeared perfectly con-

formable to the natural sense of the text." But assuming the fact to be true that the Moslem doctor did in all cases decide in their favour, that he was guided by the light of reason alone is a very gratuitous assertion. The Moslem doctors have many other lights than the light of reason in judging of the sense of the book which is accounted sacred among themselves; and the rules which guide them in that judgment, and not "the light of reason only," is that which would influence their decision in a case like this. As we have had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the translation in question, we can pronounce no judgment on the alleged fact of the mollah's preference; but this we can say, that in any case within our knowledge, in which the Romanist and Protestant interpretation of a particular text of Scripture has been presented to the consideration of a learned Moslem, he has in every case seen the Protestant view to be the right one, even when ignorant to which party belonged the view in favour of which he pronounced.

This labour occupied six months. When it was concluded, the king, who was then sixty leagues distant from Isfahan, directed that

the translation should be brought to him. On the part of the Romanists, the bishop and two missionaries, and on the part of the Armenians, four bishops, proceeded to court under the conduct of the mollah. The king received them well, assigned them lodgings, and reimbursed the expenses of the journey. But his interest in the matter seems to have considerably evaporated in the interval spent in giving effect to his wishes. When the translation was, with some ceremony, presented to him, he said that he had not time to examine it then; and, besides, as there was only one God, there could be only one prophet of God. This, if correctly reported, was said in gross ignorance of his own faith, which allows that God has had many prophets. But these words sufficed to damp the hopes which the translators had conceived that some advantage to the Christian cause might result from their labour.

The account of this transaction, from one of the parties engaged in it, has appeared to us of sufficient interest to be thus produced; the rather as it seems to have hitherto escaped the notice even of those who have made the history of Biblical translations their peculiar study. The fact that Nadir Shah had commanded a

translation of the Gospels, was known from the account given by the worthy Jonas Hanway, who, however, appears to have been ignorant that the Pentateuch and Psalms had also been translated. This account is to be found in pp. 217, 218, of the fourth volume of Hanway's " Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea, with the Revolutions of Persia;" and, as the book is somewhat scarce, we shall extract the passage :—

" Towards the close of this year, (1740,) he caused a translation of the four Evangelists to be made into Persian. It seemed, however, from the manner in which he conducted this business, to be more the effect of caprice, than of any steady and consistent plan. The affair was put under the direction of Meerza Mehtie, a man of some learning, who, being vested with a proper authority for the purpose, summoned several Armenian bishops and priests, together with divers missionaries of the Romish church, and Persian mollahs, to meet him at Isfahan. As to the latter, they could not be gainers, since the change, if any took place, was to be in prejudice of Mohammedanism. Besides, Nadir's conduct towards them had been severe *to an extreme* and unprecedented; many of

them, therefore, gave Meerza Mehtie large bribes to excuse their appearance.

"Among the Christians summoned on this occasion, only one Romish priest, born in Persia, was a sufficient master of the language to enter upon a work of so critical a nature. As to the Armenians, though they are born subjects to Persia, and intermixed with the inhabitants, yet there are few of them who understand the language fundamentally. It was natural to expect that Meerza Mehtie and the Persian mollahs would be more solicitous how to please Nadir, and to support the credit of Mohammedanism, than to divest themselves of prejudices, and become masters of so important a subject. This translation was dressed up with all the glosses which the fables and perplexities of the Koran could warrant; their chief guide was an ancient Arabic and Persian translation. Father des Vignes, a French missionary, was also employed in the work, in which he made use of the Vulgate edition. They were but six months in completing this translation, and in transcribing several fair copies of it.

"In the May following, Meerza Mehtie, with the Persian mollahs, and some of the Christian priests, set out from Isfahan, for the Persian

court, which was then held in the encampment near Tæhiran.* Nadir received them with some marks of civility, and had a cursory view of the performance. Some part of it was read to him, on which occasion he made several ludicrous remarks on the mysterious parts of the Christian religion; at the same time, he laughed at the Jews, and turned Mohammed and Ali equally into ridicule. Under such circumstances, it was impossible that this performance should produce any good effect. He observed, that the evangelists did not agree in their accounts, any more than did the Mohammedan and Christian priests; therefore he must remain under the same difficulty that he was in before—that out of both, if it pleased God to give him health, he would engage to make a religion, much better than any which had been yet practised by mankind, with several other vague reflections of the like nature. He then dismissed these churchmen and translators with several small presents, not equal in value to the expense of their journey."

To this account, Hanway appends the sensible and pious remark—"It seems as if Nadir had

* Teherân, which afterwards became, and still remains, the seat of government.

still his religion to seek; but this project, (of making a new religion,) under the present state of affairs, and considering the passion he had for military achievements, was very ridiculous, and by no means agreeable to that seriousness with which oriental princes are generally inclined to treat this important subject. What exalted notions ought not the contemplation of the Christian religion to inspire in us, when we observe the cruelty and extravagant principles of government which prevail at the courts of Mohammedan princes! In how shining a light do those appear, whose hearts are warmed with a generous desire of acting up to the dignity peculiar to the Christian religion! Nor ought it to be objected, that avarice and ambition have often involved the Christian world in distress, when we have such irresistible proof of such proceeding being diametrically opposed to the principles of Christianity."

Having noticed this attempt to obtain a translation of a portion of the sacred Scriptures, we are induced to trace the steps which have since been taken towards the great object of enabling the Persian people to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. In

doing this, the writer is much assisted by information collected from the records of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for which he is obliged to the kindness of the Rev. A. Brandram, one of the secretaries of that noble institution.

In 1806, the Baptist missionaries at Serampore commenced, at the expense of the society, a translation of the Scriptures into the Persian language, of which, however, only the Book of Psalms was ever published. In 1808-9, the Rev. Henry Martyn, then of Dinapore, undertook, with the approval of the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, and in conjunction with the too celebrated Sabat, a version of the New Testament in Persian, of which only two Gospels were printed at Calcutta. This work, as appears from the Rev. J. Sargent's very interesting memoir of Henry Martyn, was substantially the work of Sabat, working under Martyn's superintendence. The latter says, in one of his published letters, "Sabat is prodigiously proud of it. I wish some mistakes may not be found in it to put him to shame." Mistakes *were* found in it. After two of the Gospels had been printed, it was considered, on further inspection and more mature consideration, to

require too many amendments to admit of its immediate publication. It was, therefore, returned to the translator, who, under the superintendence of Mr. Martyn, bestowed so much pains and attention upon it as to render it a new, and it was hoped, a sound and accurate work. By those, however, who were considered good judges at Calcutta, it was still deemed unfit for general circulation, inasmuch as it was thought to abound with Arabic idioms, (the translator being an Arabian,) and to be written in a style pleasing only to the learned, but not sufficiently level to the capacities of the mass of common readers.

It was this decision which induced Henry Martyn to proceed to Persia, with the view of collecting the opinions of learned natives as to this translation. He reached Shiraz in June, 1811, and having at that celebrated seat of Persian literature speedily ascertained the general correctness of the opinions delivered at Calcutta, respecting the translation of the New Testament by Sabat, he forthwith resolved then and there to commence another and entirely new version of the New Testament in the Persian language. In this task he had the assistance of a learned Persian, Meerza Seid Ali Khan; and on the

24th of February, 1812, the work was completed. "I have many mercies," says the author of this great work, "in bringing it to a termination, for which to thank the Lord, and this is not the least. Now may the Spirit who gave the word, and called me, I trust, to be the interpreter of it, graciously and powerfully apply it to the hearts of sinners, even to the gathering of an elect people from the long-estranged Persians!" Mr. Martyn had also felt encouraged to undertake a version of the Psalms in the same language. He found this, he says, "a sweet employment, which caused six weary moons that waxed and waned since its commencement to pass unnoticed." It was finished by the middle of March in the same year. These works, the result of ten months' unremitted application of one "whose praise is in all the churches," were published at Calcutta in 1816.

In 1821, Meerza Jaffier, a native Persian, then residing at St. Petersburg, was engaged by the British and Foreign Bible Society to undertake a Persian translation of the Pentateuch, and on receipt of the manuscript of the Book of Genesis, 1,000 copies were printed in London *under* the editorship of Meerza Ibrahim, a

learned Persian, attached to Haileybury College. Meerza Jaffier having completed the Persian translation of the Pentateuch, was authorized to proceed with the historical books, of which he subsequently furnished the translations of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and part of Samuel. In 1822, the venerable archdeacon Robinson, then Chaplain of the Honourable East India Company, at Poonah, undertook, in connexion with the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, and at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to prepare a version of the Old Testament into Persian. This translation was duly carried forward, and separate portions were from time to time printed, until at length, in 1837, the whole work was announced as being published at Calcutta.

In 1825, The Rev. Dr. Glen, at that time one of the Scottish missionaries at Astrachan, and favourably known by his translation of the book of Psalms into Persian, (of which an edition was printed in this country by the Bible Society,) was engaged at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society to translate the poetical and prophetical books of the Old Testament into Persian, which, in the course of several years, with the aid of a Persian

moonshee, he completed. It was, in 1829, the privilege of the present writer to witness something of the progress of this great work. He was then one of a large party which found themselves for several days the inmates of Dr. Glen's primitive missionary establishment at Astrachan; and beheld with admiration the quiet way in which this good man, absorbed in his task, pursued his wonted course, undiverted for one hour by the engagements or excitement which the arrival of so large a body of Christian friends from home might have been expected to create. At his appointed hour he withdrew, and was to be seen no more until the labour of his day had ended. Yet this was made consistent with the most cordial hospitality, and the utmost attention to, and consideration for, his visitors. We were reminded, by application, of the words of Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Neh. vi. 3.

In 1832, Meerza Ibrahim, of Haileybury College, having made a translation of the Book of Isaiah into Persian, which was highly spoken of by competent judges, the British and *Foreign Bible* Society purchased the manu-

script, and printed 2,000 copies of it. In 1842, the translation of *the whole* of the Old Testament having been completed by the Rev. Dr. Glen, it was printed under the editorship of the translator at Edinburgh, the British and Foreign Bible Society contributing £500 towards the expense. It is a great satisfaction to see from this account, that by the labours of several learned men, and devoted servants of God, and through the liberality of different societies—chiefly of the British and Foreign Bible Society—the whole of the sacred Scriptures exists in the Persian tongue, and very many copies of them have been circulated. Thus the people have an opportunity of reading in their own tongue the true account—and not the false one, in which they trust—of God's wonderful work in the salvation of man by the blood shed upon the cross. May He, of his great mercy, grant that this knowledge may be in them a savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death!

We have hinted that the readiness of the Persians to hear and apprehend, is often the result of indifference, of complaisance, and of interested motives. As we know of no writer who has touched on this point more sagaciously than Mr. Southgate, we shall quote his

words: "It has often been supposed that the liberality of sentiment which is so strongly characteristic of the Persians, is a highly favourable indication with regard to efforts for their improvement. In one respect this is true, for it creates that accessibleness of which I have before spoken, as a high and peculiar encouragement. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that their liberality is not an independent love of the truth, but a general laxness of sentiment, which renders them indifferent alike to truth and error. It is a spirit of free-thinking, which casts them loose from Mohammedanism, without bringing them nearer to Christianity. It arises from their vanity, their imaginativeness, and above all, from their want of principle, both in morals and in philosophy. This, I believe, is the greatest defect, as it is the most strongly marked trait of the Persian character. By principle here, I refer not only to the everlasting foundations of moral rectitude, but to those great laws of reason, which are either innate, or, at least, readily and universally understood. A Persian, although quick to apprehend, is slow to yield to conviction; and this not from sobriety and caution, but from volatility and flightiness. His mind slips from

beneath the hold of an argument, and starts off in another direction, without having received any impression. It is this which renders controversy with him useless, and demands an immediate appeal to the conscience and the heart." This traveller adds: "Meerza Seid Ali, the coadjutor of Martyn, in the work of translating the New Testament, is still living at Shiraz, an old and respected man, although in worldly circumstances considerably reduced. Nearly thirty years (more now) have now passed away since that which he spent in the society of Martyn. He is still, as he was then, a professed inquirer for the truth, dissatisfied with his own religion, and unprepared to embrace Christianity; and yet he is doubtless more sincere in his desire for a settled faith than the thousands of his countrymen, who are drifting idly about upon the fathomless and shoreless sea of a vainglorious scepticism."

Of the lower influences, of even the duplicity from interested motives, which some Persians have been found to manifest, our own observation and experience would supply some painful examples. We prefer, however, to produce one which this traveller supplies. "Soon after my arrival at Tabreez, a young Persian

called upon me, and expressed a strong desire to study English. Knowing I was a clergyman, he expressed his great motive to be, that he might be able to learn something of the Christian religion. To use his own words, which I recorded soon after the interview, 'Man,' he said, 'must die. I also am human, and cannot live for ever. I wish to learn something of religion; to compare what the Messiah has written with what Mohammed has written. My prophet, I am convinced, has written many things that are false. He declared himself at liberty to have more wives than any other man, whereas, being a prophet, he ought not to have been attached to the things of this world. This is only one instance. Now, I wish to learn the truth, and to this end am desirous of studying English, that I may read and understand the truth.' Unfortunately for this specious profession, I ascertained soon after that the Meerza cared nothing for religion, and was far from being a serious man; and at length I obtained from himself the confession, that his sole motive was worldly ambition. He had hoped that his knowledge of English would recommend him to the notice of the Shah, and gain for him riches and honour."

CHAPTER VI.

FESTIVALS AND OBSERVANCES.

By the Mohammedan law, the times of daily prayer are five; but from some obscurity in the precept, the number has been practically reduced to three, corresponding to the "three times a day," or "the morning, noon, and night," of Jewish devotion. The prayers, and the usages connected with them, are much the same as among other Moslems. Having performed the requisite ablutions, the worshipper goes through certain postures and prostrations, to each of which there is an appropriate prayer or declaration. The principal difference is in one of the postures—where the Sunnee spreads forth his hands, but where the Sheah folds his. The Sunnee also places before him, as he kneels, a small pad or bag, containing a portion of the sacred soil of the Kaabah at Mecca, so that his forehead may rest thereon, when, in his pros-

trations, he brings it to the soil—giving the idea of worship upon holy ground. But for this the Sheah is generally content to substitute a portion of the mould from the tombs of his martyrs, Hassan and Hossein, at Kerbelah. This practice has suggested to some an idea of the possible use to which Naaman, the Syrian, designed to apply "the two mules' burden of earth,"* he desired to take with him to Damascus; namely, that he might worship the God of Israel upon a portion of the soil honoured with His immediate presence. And this appears to us not unlikely, when we consider the ideas of the local presence of God, which were then usually entertained by the heathen, and which this man strongly indicated in his declaration—"Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel."

The prayers used on such occasions, and the portions of the Koran recited, are in Arabic, and learned by rote for the purpose. The language is known only to the learned, so that

* The terms would, however, seem rather to imply that the erection of an altar with this earth was intended; but we appear to be compelled to regard the other interpretation as more probable, from the difficulty of understanding that Elisha could have heard this intention to do a thing absolutely forbidden by the law, without protesting against it. The other idea is counter to no law.

the petitions they use from day to day are, like the Latin prayers of the Romanists, scarcely intelligible to the great body of those who use them, although, from analogy of language, and from information gathered in the course of time, their general purport may be understood. It is equally lamentable and surprising to see how this system of unspiritual, mechanical worship, of praying in an unknown tongue, has been thrown up by Satan in many lands, and under many systems of error, as an effectual barrier to that free intercourse between the soul and God, through which alone it can receive nourishment. The Hebrew prayers of the uneducated Jew, the Latin prayers of the uneducated Romanist, the Arabic prayers of the uneducated Moslem, and the written prayers which the Calmuc turns in his mill—appear to be all but varied aspects of the same darkening practice. It seems to us sufficiently to explain the indifferent and heartless manner in which these forms of worship are usually gone through.

A Persian, who, like other Moslems, will apply himself to his prayers anywhere, when the appointed time arrives, seldom fails to indicate by the movement of his eye and head that

he is discharging a merely mechanical duty, and that his attention is fully awake to the circumstances passing, or the business in progress around him; and it is not unusual for him to give directions to his servant, or to throw out conversational or business remarks, in the midst of his devotions. This is so common that it does not attract attention. Something of the same kind has been noticed in the synagogues of the Jews, and is indeed inseparable from such unspiritual worship. The divided attention which we have seen a Calmuc give, on the one hand, to the revolutions of his prayer-wheel, and the other to the pot over the fire, did not seem to us more flagrant than the indecencies which we have also witnessed in the unprofitable "bodily service" of Romanists, Jews, Persians, Arabs, and Turks.

As in all Moslem countries, the sound of bells, as marking the time, and issuing the call for prayers, is in Persia counted abominable, and is not allowed even to the Christian inhabitants. The intelligent human voice is held to be the most proper instrument for this summons; and, *accordingly*, at the appointed times, a strong *and clear*-voiced man ascends to the roof of the

mosque, and sends forth his voice, which, in the open air, and amid the stillness of eastern cities, is heard at a distance, and with a distinctness which seems astonishing to us; and those who are too far off to distinguish the *words* of the crier, know, from custom, what the sound denotes. The words form the Moslem profession of faith:—"There is no Deity but God; and Mohammed is the prophet of God;" but the Sheah makes the addition, "and Ali is the vicar of God," which words seem to a Turk, who first hears them on entering the Persian territory, as a frightful blasphemy, which fills him with a painful sensation of disgust and horror. The same addition occurs in all the frequent repetitions of this profession of faith which the Moslem religion exacts. With other Moslems, the Sheahs turn their faces in the direction of Mecca, or rather of its temple, in the act of prayer. This is the *kebla*, or point of adoration, and is analogous to the ancient and still subsisting practice among the Jews, of worshipping with the face set towards Jerusalem—in Jerusalem, towards the temple—and in the temple, towards the holy of holies, Dan. vi. 10.

*Alms*giving is very strongly enjoined upon

all Mohammedans, who are taught to regard it as one of the principal means of working out their own salvation. And, as man is always eager to take upon himself the mighty task which needed the blood of God's own Son, the precept is not badly fulfilled. The Moslems are very charitable; and, besides rendering to the poor the proportion of their increase which the law demands, they give and bequeath large sums upon charitable and pious foundations. It is not necessary to constitute the merit in alms-giving that the object should be directly religious, or that the recipients should be, in the Moslem sense, pious persons. The merit lies in the intention of the giver. There is not a moralist, a tale-teller, or a poet among the Persians, who does not extol lavish charity beyond all other virtues. One poet (Jamee) beautifully says, "Be ye like unto trees, laden with fruit, and planted by the roadside, which give shade and fruit to all, even to those who pelt them with stones;" which brings to mind the incomparable words of our Saviour—"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matt. v. 45.

The ostentation which our Lord so severely reprimanded in the Pharisees of his day, is, however, more frequently than piety, the motive to the great acts of charity which the orientals frequently perform. The good name which is accorded to munificent charities, is nowhere more highly valued than in Persia; and the people of that country think that their souls will, in the life to come, be materially benefited by the blessings of those who enjoy the advantage of their establishment. From a combination of such motives arises the important fact, that most of the noble caravansaries in Persia, which afford to the traveller and his beast lodging and water without cost, as well as of the bridges, mosques, colleges, and baths, are of such charitable foundation.

The ninth month of the year, called Ramazan, is a month of fasting to the Persians, as to other Moslems. This fasting does not, like that of the Romanists, consist in abstinence merely from one kind of food, but in abstinence from *all food*, from sunrise to sunset. As the months are lunar, the Ramazan runs through the different seasons, and falls in summer as well as in winter. It is then very hard upon the labouring classes, not only from the length of

the day, but from the heat, as they cannot, like the rich, evade the real force of the obligation, by sitting up all the night, and sleeping the greater part of the day. Even the national luxury of smoking, is counted a breach of the fast; and this privation is, from the force of acquired habits above natural appetites, more sensibly felt by rich and poor than any other which the fast involves. It is with smoke that nearly all of them break their fast after this long abstinence. The pipes are filled and prepared, the fire is ready to be applied, and the moment after the sun has sunk below the horizon, a universal sigh of deep satisfaction arises throughout the land, as the first long draught of smoke is inhaled.

From what has been said respecting the lax religious views of the Persians, it may be supposed that the fast is rather laxly observed. But it is not so. The eagerness with which men perversely seize all opportunities of presenting themselves before God in the filthy rags of their own righteousness, causes such institutions to be very strictly regarded, even by those who are careless of the high duties of judgment, mercy, and truth, and who, not the less, even during the

Ramazan, "smite with the fist of wickedness," Isa. lviii. 4.

The only pilgrimage enjoined by the Mohammedan religion is to the Kaabah, or temple at Mecca, which is the central object of veneration to all the Moslem world. The Persians, however, are far from strict in the observance of this precept. The great distance and many dangers of the journey, the fact that most of it lies through the country under the dominion of the Turks, whom they hate, and that the sacred place itself is in the hands of Sunnees, who regard them as heretics, and will not admit them to the sacred places without outward conformity to the prevailing system—altogether operate in preventing this duty from being discharged, except by a few persons of strong zeal, and whose means and health enable them to undertake the pilgrimage, without material damage to their families. Still, the great pilgrim caravan seldom leaves Damascus for Mecca, without a considerable number of Persians in it, distinguishable by their black lambskin caps and close-fitting dress. On their return, they usually pass through Hebron and Jerusalem, the former of which the Moslem holds sacred on account of his veneration for Abraham,

and the latter from the desire to visit the very sacred mosque built there by Omar, on the site of Solomon's temple. Before reaching home, the pilgrim also, if possible, traverses the Arabian Irâk, (Babylonia,) and visits the sacred tombs of Ali and his son Hossein, at Kerbelah, near Baghdad. He who has performed his pilgrimage to Mecca, bears the honourable title of Hadjee, or "pilgrim," for the rest of his life, a distinction highly esteemed by the Moslem world in general, though the Persians themselves have a saying, which implies that those who have this title are oftener the worst than the best of men.

Some perform this pilgrimage by deputy. There are to be found in Persia numbers of Arabs, who have already been to Mecca, or are ready to go there, and who are willing to transfer the distinction and advantage they derive from the pilgrimage to any one who will pay them well for it. In such cases, to prevent fraud, the employers require them to bring back or to produce the certificate granted to pilgrims by the sheriff of Mecca, the possession of which transfers to himself all the benefits of the particular pilgrimage to which it appertains.

But the great body of the Persians satisfy

their consciences with the personal performance of a less onerous pilgrimage than that to Mecca. The country of which Baghdad is the chief living, and Babylon the chief dead city, is the holy land of the sectaries of Ali. It was at Kufah, in this region, upon the Euphrates, some thirty miles south of the ruins of Babylon, that Ali established the seat of his government; it was in this region that he lost his life by the hand of an assassin; and it was here that the great struggle between the contending factions continued to rage long after his death. Here many illustrious members of Ali's house fell victims to the dire contention; and this is the soil which drank their blood, and which covers their remains. Hence this locality is regarded by the Persians with a veneration almost equal to that with which the sacred soil of Mecca is contemplated. Hither they come on pilgrimages from all parts, to the tombs of their martyrs; and such as can afford to do so, bring with them their coffined dead, to lay them in the earth which covers the bones of those whose memory they cherish with such deep and superstitious veneration.

The places of resort to the pilgrims in this region are four. The principal and most fre-

quented is Kerbelah, or Meshid Hossein, where it is presumed that Hossein, the second son of Ali, is buried. This is a few miles to the north-west of the ruins of Babylon. About thirty miles south of this, and a few miles west of Kufah, is Nejiff or Meshid Ali, which is affirmed to be the resting-place of the caliph from whom the sect derives its name. Next is Kathem, distant about three miles from Baghdad, where is the mausoleum of the seventh imaum, Mousa-el-Kathem, or the Patient, who was put to death by one of the caliphs, on suspicion of being engaged in a conspiracy against his throne. A splendid mosque has been raised at this spot, and others, hardly less magnificent, at Kerbelah and Meshid Ali. The fourth place in this quarter which the pilgrims visit is a cavern, not far from Baghdad, where the twelfth imaum is believed, as before related, (p. 91,) to have mysteriously disappeared.

The mosques at Kerbelah, Meshid Ali, and Kathem, have been enriched to a wonderful degree by the gifts of pilgrims, and by costly presents from Persia and India. That at Kerbelah was, however, stripped of all its treasures, in 1801, by the Wahabees; while that of *Meshid* Ali was emptied of all its riches by the

pasha of Baghdad, ostensibly to save it from the same fate; but this mattered little to the Sheahs, as the pasha neglected to return the treasures when the danger had passed away—so that all the difference lay in being plundered by the pasha instead of by the Arabs. The zeal of the worshippers is, however, likely ere long to repair these losses, and to restore the mosques to their original splendour. Mr. Southgate mentions, that while he was at Baghdad in 1839, the offering of an Indian prince for the shrine at Kerbelah arrived at that city. It was a kind of pavilion, intended to cover the tomb of Hossein. It consisted of a canopy of cloth, richly adorned with emeralds, and sustained by four pillars of solid gold, set with diamonds, and between which hung festoons of the finest pearls. Its value was estimated at £21,500.

That this sacred territory is in the possession of the Turks is a matter of much grief and annoyance to the Persians. But, notwithstanding the oppressions and insults to which they are subject, the numbers are vast which perform this pilgrimage year by year—and the traveller who passes to or from Baghdad by way of Kermanshah and Hamadan, is sure to encounter at all seasons, except the depth of

winter, large parties of pilgrims. There is usually a great proportion of women and children—for it is not necessary that the pilgrimage should be a voluntary act, and one who has been taken to the shrine in his infancy enjoys, ever after, all the honours of a pilgrim. We have sometimes tarried with such parties in the same caravansary, and have been startled at the great number of corpses, in rude oblong packing-cases, which were on such occasions seen strewed about the open yard, the odour from which was often overpowering to the unpractised organs of Europeans, though it seemed to be altogether unheeded by the pilgrims, who upon the road also appeared to see and feel the coffins knocking about among them with perfect unconcern. The coffins are carried, two balancing each other upon the opposite sides of a horse or mule. The bodies are being taken to Kerbelah for interment in ground reputed holy —another of the miserable shifts, in seeking increase of safety in the world to come for those they love, to which those are driven who have not the happiness of knowing that comfortable REST, in the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, which those enjoy to whom the riches and fulness of his grace have been revealed.

The Persians, like other Moslems, observe the feast of Bairam, for six days after the fast of Ramazan. This is the great religious festival of the Mohammedans, and is celebrated with the more ardour, from its coming immediately after so long and trying a fast. Every Moslem nation adopts its own mode of testifying joy. But there is one common observance among all such as can afford it, of appearing in new clothes upon the first day of the feast. Mr. Morier thus describes the festivities, as he witnessed them at Bushire, on the Persian Gulf: "The Ramazan was now over. The moon which marks its termination was seen on the preceding evening just at sunset, when the ships at anchor fired their guns on the occasion; and on the morning of our visit the Bairam was announced by the discharge of cannon. A large concourse of people, headed by the *Peish-namuz*, went down to the seaside to pray; and when they had finished their prayers, more cannon were discharged. Just before we passed through the gates of the town, in returning from our visit, we rode through a crowd of men, women, and children, all in their best clothes, who, by merry-making of every kind, were celebrating the feast.

Among their sports I discovered something like the roundabout of an English fair, except that it appeared of much ruder construction. It consisted of two rope seats, suspended in the form of a pair of scales, from a large stake fixed in the ground. In these were crowded full-grown men, who, like boys, enjoyed the continual twirl, in which the conductor of the sport, a poor Arab, was labouring with all his strength to keep the machine."

The Eed-el-Korban, or festival of the sacrifice, is another celebration in honour of Abraham, who, out of the fulness of his obedience to the Almighty, would have offered in sacrifice his son Ishmael, whom the Arabs regard as their progenitor, and to whom the Koran transfers many of the circumstances which really belong to the history of Isaac.

"The day before the feast," says the pious anonymous writer of an unpublished—though printed—Tour in Persia, "about four hundred camels are collected from the neighbouring country; and the first that rises after resting is chosen as the victim, shot, and then speared. Mohammed Ali Khan was giving me this description before Seid Ali, (Henry Martyn's coadjutor in translating the New Testament,

who rejoined to the latter sentence, expressive of putting the animal to death, 'That is like YOUR GREAT SACRIFICE.'" "It is," adds this writer, "a common practice with the people in Persia, to lead a sheep or goat round their bed, cut its throat, and give the meat to the poor. They think one life saves another. This is no doubt a remnant of some of the Jewish customs, of which traces are still to be seen in this country." We now proceed to describe some striking annual celebrations which are peculiar to the Persians and the sectaries of Ali.

A solemn festival in honour of Ali is held on the 21st of the fast month, Ramazan. For this purpose a covered gallery is erected somewhere outside the town, where the chief men of the place take their station. In front of this gallery is a kind of pulpit, eight feet high, covered with cloth. Here the person appointed to pronounce the eulogium upon Ali reads for an hour or more from a book, called the *Moctel Nameh*, or Book of the Murder, containing a history of the death of Ali, chanting without intermission, in a loud and doleful voice. There are certain passages of which he pronounces only the first word, leaving the congregation to finish. At the end of each passage they repeat this impre-

cation—"May the curse of God be upon the murderer of Ali!" and all the people respond, "Rather more than less!" After the sermon, the people return in procession to the town, three camels bearing representations of the tombs of Ali and his two sons, Hassan and Hossein. These are followed by three chests, covered with blue cloth, containing the spiritual treatises which they are said to have written; horses carrying bows, turbans, and flags; and men bearing on their heads little boxes, covered with feathers and flowers, containing the Koran. The procession is closed by musicians and young men, performing a variety of dances—for the religious dances, even on sober occasions, to which there are some allusions in Scripture, are not yet extinct in the east.

More striking still are the solemnities of the first days of the month Moharrem, which are devoted to a solemn mourning in memory of the death of Hossein, the son of Ali. During this period the Persians appear as mourners, put on all the outward appearances of grief, abstain from shaving their heads, from bathing, and even from changing their clothes. On the eve of the first of Moharrem the mosques are hung with black. The next day, the pulpits are

dressed in the same manner, the *Akhond* and *Peish-namuz* (inferior ministers of religion) ascend them, and narrate the particulars of the murder of Hossein, with all the inflexions of voice that are calculated to render them more pathetic. The congregation are soon worked up to a high pitch of emotion, waving their bodies to and fro, and smiting their breasts, ejaculating, "O Hossein!" "Alas, Hossein!" Parts of the history thus recited are in verse, and are chanted to a most doleful tune. Various episodes of the history are daily represented by itinerant minstrels, (just as the circumstances of our Lord's passion are represented in Roman Catholic countries,) and banners, to which are fastened pictures relating to it, are carried about the streets, followed by crowds of men and boys, some representing the soldiers of Hossein, and some his enemies. The two parties sometimes come to blows, and these sham fights not seldom terminate in the death or serious injury of some of the combatants. It is difficult to find persons willing to personate the enemies of Hossein; and prisoners of war, slaves, and criminals, are therefore often compelled to take this part.

The solemnities of this occasion in fact com-

pose a kind of drama of two acts, occupying as many days, and representing the successive scenes of the catastrophe, commencing with the flight of Hossein from Medinah, and terminating with his death on the plains of Kerbelah; and each daily representation is preceded by the reading, in the manner described, of a portion of the history, with an appropriate sermon or exhortation. The last part, which is reserved for the tenth day, called the *Rooz Katl*, (the day of murder,) or *Rooz Hossein*, comprises the events of the day on which he met his death, and is acted with great pomp before the king in the great square of the city. The enthusiasm with which the Persians dwell upon the character of Hossein, and every incident of the closing scenes of his life, is undiminished by lapse of time. Their strongest religious and national feelings are on this occasion brought into play. They execrate Yezid the usurper, and even Omar, (whom other Moslems venerate,) that it is necessary, as Mr. Morier has remarked, to have witnessed the scenes that are exhibited in their cities to judge of the degree of fanaticism which at this time possesses them.

"I have seen," says this traveller, "some of the most violent of them, as they vociferated '*Ya*

Hossein!' walk about the streets almost naked, with only their loins covered, and their bodies streaming with blood from the cuts which they have voluntarily given to themselves, either of acts of love, anguish, or mortification," such as, he rightly thinks, must have been the cuttings which were forbidden to the Israelites by Moses, Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1. And their extravagancies probably bear much resemblance to the practices of the priests of Baal, who "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them," 1 Kings xviii. 28. It even appears from Jer. xvi. 6, 7, that these practices were retained as testimonials of grief by the Israelites, though forbidden by the law of Moses.

Some further idea of the manner in which this highly imaginative people are acted upon on such occasions, may be formed from the description which Mr. Morier gives of what he witnessed during the *eighth* night of the Moharrem, in presence of the highest people of the land. "On entering the room, we found a large assembly of Persians, clad in dark-coloured clothes, which, accompanied with their black caps, black beards, and their dismal faces, looked really as if they were 'afflicting their

souls.' We observed that 'no man did put on him his ornaments,' Exod. xxxiii. 4. They wore neither their daggers nor any other part of their dress which they regard as ornamental. A mollah of high consideration sat next to the grand vizier, and kept him in serious conversation, while the remaining part of the company communicated with each other in whispers. After we had been seated some time, the windows of the room in which we were seated were thrown open, and we then discovered a priest, placed on a high chair, under the covering of a tent, surrounded by a crowd of the populace, the whole place being lighted up with candles. He commenced with an exordium, in which he reminded them of the great value of each tear shed for the sake of the Imaum Hossein, which would be an atonement for a past life of wickedness; and also informed them, with much solemnity, that 'whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among the people,' Lev. xxiii. 29. He then began to read from a book, with a sort of nasal chant, that part of the tragic history of Hossein appointed for the day, which soon produced its effect upon his audience, for he had scarcely turned over three leaves, before the

grand vizier began shaking his head to and fro, and to utter in a most piteous voice, the usual Persian exclamation of grief, '*Wahi! wahi! wahi!*' both of which acts were followed, in a more or less violent manner, by the rest of the audience.

"The chanting of the priest lasted nearly an hour, and some parts of the story were indeed pathetic, and well calculated to rouse the feelings of a superstitious and lively people. In one part of it all the people stood up; and I observed that the grand vizier turned himself towards the wall, with his hand extended before him, and prayed. After the priest had finished, a company of actors appeared, some dressed as women, who chanted forth their parts from slips of paper, in a sort of recitative, that was not unpleasing even to our ears. In the very tragical parts most of the audience appeared to weep very unaffectedly; and as I sat near the grand vizier and his neighbour the priest, I was witness to many real tears that fell from them. In some of these mournful assemblies, it is the custom for a priest to go about to each person, in the height of his grief, with a piece of cotton in his hand, with which he carefully collects the falling tears, and then squeezes it

into a bottle, preserving them with the greatest caution. This practice illustrates that passage in Psalm lvi. 8, 'Put thou my tears into thy bottle.' Some Persians believe that in the agony of death, when all medicines have failed, a drop of the tears so collected, put into the mouth of a dying man, has been known to revive him. It is for this use they are collected."

There is much matter for thought in this account. But to our mind there is one consideration that absorbs all others. Is not the deep emotion of these people in the sufferings and death of Hossein, a strong reproof to us for the comparative indifference with which we contemplate and speak of the sufferings and death of our Divine Lord? What is Hossein to them?—a man who was smitten down in the course of worldly adventure, as others have been smitten, and who strove all he could to avert and resist the doom which fell upon him; and whose death brought no gain, no ransom, no hope to any. And what is our Redeemer?—who freely laid aside a glory greater than that which kings and conquerors have died to win; who, from pure love to a fallen race, became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and who, for our good, in delivering us from the

wrath to come, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, shrank not from shame and spitting, and bowed his head in death upon the cross. Here is a theme most worthy of our liveliest emotions—our sorrow, our sympathy, our gratitude; and yet how little do we habitually feel our obligations! Shall not the men of Persia, who mourn so intensely for Hossein, rise against us in the day of judgment, and condemn us—for lo, a greater than Hossein is here—has lived, has died for us, and we set not our hearts upon him? How would these poor benighted Sheahs feel, if they knew of Christ all we know of him! God, of his great mercy, grant that they may know Him soon; and that they may centre on him all those keen susceptibilities which now run to waste and evil among them!

Among the incidents of the Moharrem celebration, is the representation of the marriage of the young Kassem, the son of Hassan, with the daughter of his uncle Hossein. A young man acts the part of the bride, attired in a rich wedding-dress, and accompanied by her relatives, who sing a mournful elegy upon the death of the bridegroom, who was slain before the marriage was fully completed. At parting from his bride to go to the fight, Kassem takes

a most affecting farewell of her; and with a presentiment of his fate, he gives her, in token of his love, a mourning robe which she puts on. At this moment, the people, transported with rage, rush upon the effigy representing the caliph Yezid, the destroyer of Ali's family, and tear it in pieces.

An incident which procures much good feeling towards the English at the feast of Moharrem, is the represented intercession of a European ambassador with Yezid in behalf of Hossein. This ambassador they suppose to have been English! merely because the English are the Europeans from distant parts (the Russians being their neighbours) with whom they are best acquainted; but if the incident really occurred, the ambassador was probably from the Greek emperor. The man representing him invests himself as nearly as he can with the costume in which Englishmen appear at the present day in Persia—including that singular badge of European civilization, the hat; and he counts himself perfect in his part if he can pick up a few English or even French words, of any or no meaning, for the occasion. A missionary relates that he was once applied to by a young man who usually performed this part, and who had thought himself highly

accomplished for it by the possession of a few words which an Englishman had taught him, and which he had been in the habit of pronouncing with a force and emphasis which his hearers much admired. But he had discovered lately that these words were mere unmeaning slang, and desired something better and more appropriate. To meet this want he was taught to pronounce the Lord's prayer in English—the propriety of which may be very much questioned, considering the purpose for which it was to be used, and the person to whom it was to be addressed. We should not be surprised to learn that eventually, as taught by this man to others, the Lord's prayer in something like English, becomes the usual address of the mock ambassador on this great occasion.

The Persians have also a very peculiar festival, of a vindictive nature, in commemoration of the death of the caliph Omar—being, as far as we know, the only anniversary of the world held in *dishonour* of the dead. A large platform is erected, on which is fixed an image, as much as possible disfigured and deformed, intended to represent the caliph. Addressing themselves to this image, the assembled people shower all manner of revilings upon it for

having supplanted Ali, the lawful successor of the prophet. At length, having exhausted their powers of abuse, they attack the image with sticks and stones, till they have shattered it into pieces. The inside is hollow, and full of sweetmeats, which thus become dispersed, and are greedily devoured by the assembled mob.

Friday, as is well known, is the sabbath-day of the Moslem world. The reason which induced Mohammed to fix upon this day is not distinctly stated in the Koran. The most probable explanation is, that he borrowed the idea of a sabbath, as he did of many other of his institutions, from the Jews and Christians, and fixed on Friday, that the day might distinguish his followers from them, and that the appearance of imitation might be avoided. The reason is, however, of little importance. The pretended apostle did actually give to that day by positive injunction, the same degree of religious observance which the Christians of that time, as known to him, were wont to practise upon the Lord's-day. "O true believers," he says, "when ye are called to prayer on the day of the assembly, hasten to the commemoration of God, and leave merchandizing. This will be better for you, if ye knew it. And when

prayer is ended, then disperse yourselves through the land as ye list, and seek gain of the liberality of God."

In conformity with this injunction, the day is not regarded as one in which entire abstinence from work and ordinary business is required. It is commonly made a day of repose and of recreation. It is, however, by Moslems generally regarded as obligatory to listen to the call to prayer as Mohammed commanded, and to be present in the mosque at the noontide service. There is, therefore, no occasion—except at the great feasts and the fast—on which the mosques (though open and frequented every day) are generally so well attended as on Friday noon. The day itself is called by a name signifying the day of assembly. There is nothing peculiar in the devotions of the day, except that, in the great mosques, the *Khouteb* is repeated in conjunction with the usual prayers at noon. This consists of ascriptions of praise to the Almighty, and in supplications for Mohammed, the first four caliphs, (but in Persia for Ali and his house,) the reigning family, and the nation. A discourse in the high mosques usually follows, which in Persia is frequently tainted with the strong philoso-

phical and poetical mysticism of the Sooffees, but in general dwells on points of moral and ceremonial duty.

The observances of the day are in fact founded chiefly upon, not only the injunctions but the known practice of Mohammed, who was wont to conduct the public prayers on that occasion, and afterwards to address the people. The same custom was observed by the caliphs, and has descended to the present day: the duty now devolves upon the sultan of Turkey, in the regard of that great majority of the Moslem world who recognise in him the lawful successor of Mohammed in the caliphat. He does it, however, only by proxy, by vicars acting under the authority of his seal, though it is the custom for the sultan himself to be present, and it very rarely happens that he does not repair in state to the mosque on Friday at noon. The obligation is not, however, regarded in the same light by the Persians as by the Turks. The rightful successor of their "prophet," having according to their belief disappeared, they have no caliph to direct the worship of Friday, and do not, therefore, regard themselves as bound to be present in the mosques on that day. They have, indeed,

an *Imaum-i-Jumah*, or Imaum of the Assembly, who performs the service of Friday noon, but they consider his office as provisory merely, till the true Imaum shall appear. Still, out of respect to the day, and the ancient usage of their religion, their attendance at the noon prayers of Friday is more full than on any other day of the week.

Something of this difference of view as to the service of the mosque, may help to account for a remarkable difference in the practice as regards the admission of strangers to the mosques themselves. It has been seen that the Persians generally regard unbelievers of Islam so unclean that their contact pollutes that which they touch, and carry this notion to an extent unknown to the Turks. Yet the Turks will not admit Christians to their mosques; and the presence of one within their precincts, (without a special order from the sultan,) would certainly lead to a popular commotion, and very probably to his death. In fact, their feeling on this matter is analogous to that of the Jews with respect to their temple, into the sacred courts of which no Gentile might enter on pain of death. The reader will remember the commotion raised against Paul in the

temple, under the notion that he had "brought Greeks into the temple," and so "polluted the holy place," Acts xxi. 28, 29. It is very different with the Persians, who admit Europeans (but not native Christians) into their mosques without scruple—except perhaps a few to which a peculiar sanctity is ascribed on account of the tomb of some great saint or imaum being inclosed within its walls. But it is rather as shrines than as mosques that they are accounted so sacred, and that access to them is difficult. We have known that in villages which afforded no other accommodation for travellers, the humble barn-like mosque has been devoted to the reception of parties of Europeans; and it has even happened that while under this arrangement we have been refreshing or reposing ourselves within the mosque, the villagers have assembled for morning and evening worship upon its flat roof.

The mosques themselves of this country differ very materially from those of Turkey. The manner in which a Turkish town is aggrandized in the external view by the beautiful round towers, or minars, which shoot up in all directions, is almost entirely wanting in Persian

cities, which, unless built on the side of a hill, exhibit a dull and level uniformity, broken only by the trees which rise with the city, unless by a dome here and there, rising to some extent above the dead uniformity, and unless a close inspection enables the eye to trace the long line of low domes which mark the situation of the covered bazaar. The Turks, as a people, may claim little merit in this elegant distinction of their cities, as they seem merely to have imitated and perpetuated the form of the Christian churches which they found in the fair lands which the providence of God has for a season subjected to their rule. All their principal mosques are on the model of that of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, and many of the old ones in Asia Minor, which are of the same form as those now built, bear manifest signs of having been once Christian churches. Thus in the Turkish mosque we may consider that we have the form of the churches which arose in the lands which first received the gospel of Christ; and that in fact the tidings of salvation to a ruined world, through a crucified Redeemer, were once set forth in many of the buildings which now witness the prostrations of a Christ-refusing people.

In some of the principal cities, the domes of the principal mosques and mausoleums are of sufficient size to attract attention in a general view; but the effect is as nothing compared with the Turkish minars, of which there are often more than one to a single mosque, rising from a square base in one white cylindrical shaft into the sky, and the uniformity of their surface broken only by the small galleries from which the criers send forth the call to prayer. Of this appendage the Persian mosques are almost entirely destitute, in the shape described; but in some cases in great cities, round towers rise to no great height from the roof of the mosque, and are formed of bricks, the outer surfaces of which are glazed in variegated colours. They are designed only for ornamental effect, and are never applied to the same purpose as in Turkey, having indeed no galleries for the purpose, and the call to prayers being given from the roof.

In other respects the Persian mosques are, in their exterior, altogether unlike those of Turkey. Instead of being the most conspicuous objects in a city, the traveller may often pass them without observing them, or *hear the* call to prayer close by without being

able to discover the place from which it proceeds. The mosques sometimes open immediately upon the streets, and present the same low, bare, mud wall with the other buildings. The interior in these cases is corresponding; a low though spacious apartment, with a level ceiling, supported on plain pillars, and the whole without ornament or pretensions of any kind. The interior of a Turkish mosque, though generally plain enough according to European notions, is rich compared with those of Persia. There is no pulpit or furniture of any kind, excepting a straw mat, and a small seat for the preacher. There are no decorations, often not an inscription on the walls, a stone on which simply indicates the direction towards which the worshipper must turn in prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

SOOFFEEISM.—ARTS AND SCIENCES.

It is impossible to write of Persia with the view of affording some notion of the religious, as well as social condition of the people, without noticing, however slightly, the principles of what is called Sooffeeism, which has taken a strange hold of the national mind.

The term *Sooffee*, which means "wise," or "pious," and is metaphysically used to denote a religious man, is supposed to be derived from the term *saaf*, "pure," or "clear;" or, from *suffa*, which signifies purity. Some have traced it to *soof*, "wool," or "wool-bearing," in allusion to the coarse woollen garments usually worn by its teachers. It is worthy of remark, that these terms are all from the Arabic; and that the accounts we have of the Sooffees are comparatively of a modern date, being all subsequent to the conquest of Persia by the caliph

Omar. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the name may have been originally adopted from the Greek term Σοφοὶ, *sophoi*, "wise men."

The general ideas of the Sooffees concerning God, are not unlike those of the ancient Pythagoreans. The radical principle of their system is, the doctrine of the Infinite in the Finite; and the differences which are observable among the Sooffee teachers consist chiefly in their explanations of the *mode* of this manifestation. Thus, according to the theory of one of these teachers, the Infinite is expressed in the Finite, as a reflection from a mirror, or it is diffused through it as a higher life, or it is transferred to it, as when each individual is supposed to be a particle of the Divine essence. In all these, the generic idea is still retained. Deity is in some way manifested in humanity, and the principal question is, as to the mode of this manifestation.

It is currently described as a common belief of the Sooffee, that every man is an incarnation of Deity, or that, at least, all are partakers of the Divine principle. This generic idea may be traced in all the writings of the Sooffees, which in prose and verse form a very large proportion of the whole literature of Persia. This idea

may be regarded as the source of all that is good and evil in the system. It tends to produce that liberality which we have had occasion to indicate as a characteristic of the Persian mind, for a Sooffee regards every human being as in some sort a representative of the Deity. "I hold," said one of them, when rebuked for his intimacy with Christians, "I hold that all men are of God, and are therefore pure: I regard none as unclean." Another of its tendencies is to a laxity of morals; for it is generally understood — and it is admitted by many of themselves — that the principles of Sooffeeism will, and do very often, cover the grossest delinquencies of conduct. By holding *all* things to be from God, they break up the very foundations of morality and religion, and declare good and evil, virtue and vice, to be alike of Divine origin.

In others, the very same belief assumes an entirely different aspect. Regarding themselves as the offspring of God, they insist upon both the possibility and the duty of re-uniting ourselves to the Divine essence from which we have sprung. The great means to this end is, to abstract the soul from worldly things, and to *absorb* it in Divine contemplation. This, in

their view, takes the place of external worship, which they contemn as subjecting the soul to the bondage of arbitrary forms. They discourse largely and eloquently upon the love of God, the dignity of virtue, and the holy joys of a union with the Deity. The Musnavi, their principal book, is full of the most impassioned sentiments of this kind, as is also their most admired poetry, as the Persians themselves understood it, although to the uninitiated it seems to bear a very different aspect. But they insist that all the odes of their celebrated poets are mystical; and that the poets, being generally Sooffees, "profess eager desires without carnal affections, and circulate the cup, but no material goblet, since all things are spiritual in their sect, all mystery within mystery." In fact, they regard this poetry as of the same nature as Solomon's Song; and, indeed, the fact that so large a proportion of the poetry of Western Asia, that is, of Arabia and Persia, is employed in the expression of religious emotions mystically, under the same images that we find there, is a very strong argument for the general opinion, that the Canticles form a mystical or allegorical religious poem, the details of which, although they seem to us "hard to be under-

stood," are perfectly intelligible in a sacred sense to the Persian and Arabian of the present day, as they were to the ancient Hebrew.

The principle of this poetical mysticism is clearly announced by the poet Jamee, who tells us that he addresses the Almighty by no particular name, for that everything in the universe declares his presence and existence.

"Sometimes the wine, sometimes the cup I call thee; sometimes the lure, sometimes the net I call thee.
Excepting thy name, there is not another letter in the tablet of the universe.
Say by what appellation shall I call thee?"

Another passage, avowedly of this mystical character, we copy from Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, as the most characteristic specimen of this kind of verse on which we can lay our hands:—

"Cup-bearer of orthodox wine*—from among us—
Which carries away the darkness of idolatry;
Which, to our gloomy hearts, is like a flame of fire,
Or the midnight illumination of Mount Sinai—
Give us goblets, that we may move aside from ourselves,
And, out of ourselves, in ecstasy, take our way towards the Incomparable.

Musician, put thy heart-attracting breath to the reed,
And shorten this dark night of separation.
Raise the curtain from the morning of conjunction;

* Literally, *wine of the acknowledgment of the Divine unity*, opposed to the dry dulness and gloomy distraction of polytheism.

Convert into the dawn of day the eve of our painful banishment,
That I may be freed at length from this disunion,
And may gain the presence of the object of my love.*

Cup-bearer, a cup of Magian wine,
Fresh drawn from the jar of the wine-house,
Pour into the palate of the dry-lipped Hazin,
As a libation to his fiery heat.

Musician, thy breath gives brightness to the soul;
For the dead of heart it is the inspiration of the Messiah.
We are shrunk, as stagnant blood in the darkened cuticle:
A lancet is good for a congealed vein.
For the dead heart, the cold body is a grave:
The sound of thy reed is the voice of the last trumpet."

The disregard of outward worship among the Sooffees makes them, more than anything else, obnoxious to the rigid Moslems, and more especially to the mollahs, who have not failed to perceive that their own influence with the people is compromised by the growth of this doctrine. They accuse its followers of atheism, and sometimes endeavour to draw them into the admission of consequences which would render them liable to punishment under the Moslem law. But these attempts are seldom successful. One obstacle to their accomplishment is, that a large proportion of the

* This may be the more intelligible, when it is understood that the Sooffees suppose the cause of love to be an anxious desire of the soul for union. Thus, they compare the soul to a bird confined in a cage, panting for liberty, and pining at its separation from the Divine essence.

Sooffees are sincere Mohammedans, notwithstanding the palpable inconsistency of the two forms of anti-Christian belief. Mr. Elphinstone says:—"I have heard a man expatiate with rapture on the beauty of the Sooffee system, and on the enlarged and liberal views of human actions to which it leads, who has soon after stickled, in the same company, for every tenet of Islam, and rejected with horror the idea of doubting the eternity of hell-fire. When the difficulty of reconciling this doctrine with the belief that nothing existed but God was pointed out, he said, that the system of the Sooffees was certainly true, but that the eternity of hell was proved by the word of God (meaning the Koran) itself."

The principles of Sooffeeism are undoubtedly on the increase in Persia, and are, indeed, diffused to a much greater extent than might at first sight appear. To regard the Sooffees as a sect merely, would be to convey an inadequate idea of the subject; for every Persian is so far a Sooffee, in that the religious vagaries which characterise that system are the most natural modes of thought to the Persian mind. It can only be described as a sect with regard *to those* who hold the principles of Sooffeeism

as classified into a system; but, in fact, the Persians generally have the elements of this philosophy floating in their minds, as the natural product of their singularly imaginative temperament, their love of the ideal, and their want of fixed principles, either in religion or in philosophy. It is impossible, therefore, to state the number or proportion of those who cherish the principles of Sooffeeism. For the most part they do not appear as open sectaries, although they are to be found in every part of the empire, have their acknowledged head at Shiraz, and their chief men in all the principal cities. The late shah was supposed to belong to their party, although he was at the same time very rigid in the performance of his religious duties as a Moslem.

In what degree the prevalence of these principles may be regarded as an obstacle or an aid to the ultimate diffusion of the doctrine of Christ in this interesting country is a difficult question, which the result alone can satisfactorily solve. Our own impression is, that the religion of Mohammed, by formally and deliberately shutting out the essential belief in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer, is an error so appallingly inveterate, that what-

ever tends to sap and weaken its foundation is to be regarded as an advantage—as an unbolting the iron doors of the prison-house. It becomes us to speak reverently of the hidden purposes of God; but it may be that it is his design that the system of the false prophet should be thus weakened from within previously to its final overthrow. It is certain that the Sooffee sees nothing abhorrent to his principles in those great doctrines of Christian truth which orthodox Moslems regard with hatred and scorn.

This seems a suitable place for introducing the texts of Scripture which are commonly produced by Mohammedans in support of their own religion. We are indebted for the statement to Mr. Southgate:—

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation," Gen. xvii. 20. The Arabs, as is well known, claim Ishmael as their great progenitor. The Sheahs suppose the twelve princes here indicated to be the twelve Imaums of the family of Ali, whom they affirm to be the only lawful successors of Mohammed.

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him," Deut. xviii. 18. The Moslems pretend that no prophet like unto Moses has appeared, except Mohammed.

"And Moses said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them," Deut. xxxiii. 2. Here, say the Moslems, are foretold the three dispensations; that of Moses from Mount Sinai; that of Jesus from (as they affirm) Mount Seir; and that of Mohammed from Paran, by which, they suppose, are intended the mountains near Mecca.

"For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, and let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels," Isaiah xxi. 6, 7. This, according to the Moslem doctors, typifies the gospel and Islamism, and the two horsemen represent Jesus and Mohammed. The former having

entered Jerusalem upon an ass, and the camel being the principal animal in the country of the latter, they are considered as forming appropriate types of the two religions.

The forty-second chapter of Isaiah is supposed to be throughout a prophecy of Mohammed, on account, as it would seem, of the allusions to the destruction of idolatry, in the eighth and seventeenth verses, and to the Arabian tribe of Kedar in the eleventh. The first six verses of the sixty-third chapter are also claimed by the Moslem controversialists as prophetic of Mohammed, because they speak of war and blood, with which the religion of the Koran is acknowledged to be more familiar than the pacific dispensation of Christ.

The passages in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of St. John's Gospel, which speak of the Comforter, are interpreted by the Moslems to allude to Mohammed. Here, they say, is one instance of the corruption of the Christian copies of the gospel. The original word παράκλητος, *parakletos*, they affirm should be περικλυτὸς, *periklutos*, a word which, like Mohammed in Arabic, signifies illustrious, or noble. These texts will suffice at least to show that Moslem

scholars have exercised no little research and ingenuity in drawing arguments for their religion from the sacred Scriptures.

With a few words on the arts and sciences of the people, we may now conclude this volume.

The means employed by them in tilling the ground, appear to be just the same as those used by their ancestors in the most remote ages, and seem to be quite similar to those alluded to in the Scriptures. The ploughing is performed by means of a share drawn by two oxen, harnessed not to the horns but to a yoke that passes over the chest. This share is very short, and the coulter only slightly cuts the ground. As the furrows are made, the clods are broken with large wooden beaters, (Isa. xxviii. 24,) and the surface is smoothed with the spade, and with a harrow that has very small teeth. The sickles used in Persia are not like ours, being scarcely bent in the blade. Threshing is performed either by the one scriptural mode of treading out the corn, or by the other scriptural mode of the "threshing instrument having teeth," mentioned in Isa. xli. 15, and elsewhere. This is a square wooden frame, containing two cylinders, placed parallel to

each other, and having a rotatory motion. They are stuck full of spikes, with sharp square points, but not all of a length. Thus the rollers have much resemblance to the barrel of an organ, and their projections, when brought in contact with the corn, break the stalk and disengage the ear. The machine is put in motion by two oxen yoked to the frame, and guided by a man, who sits on a plank that covers the frame containing the cylinders. He drives this equipage in a circle around a heap of corn, keeping at a certain distance from its verge, close to which stands a second peasant, holding a long-handled fork, pronged like the spread-out sticks of a fan, with which he throws the unbound sheaves forward to meet the rotatory motion of the machine. He is also provided with a shovel, wherewith to remove to a place aside, the corn that has already passed under the machine. At that place, other men are stationed with the like implement, with which they cast the corn aloft into the air, when the wind blows among the chaff, and the grain falls to the ground. This process is repeated till the corn is completely winnowed; it is then gathered up, and is generally *deposited for* use in large earthen jars.

But the chief attention of the Persians has been devoted to their gardens, and their success has been proportioned to their labours. Their vegetables and fruits, of which the variety is great, are excellent. The latter may be said to form, during the season, no inconsiderable part of the daily food of the lowest classes of the inhabitants of this kingdom. The melons are peculiarly fine and abundant, and are held in high estimation. In the neighbourhood of Isfahan, extensive fields are appropriated to its culture; and the country around that city is decorated with large and handsome pigeon-houses or towers, which are kept up at a considerable expense, solely to obtain what is esteemed the best manure for this favourite fruit—for the bird itself is not eaten by the Persians. The great value here attached to this manure has been thought by some to throw light upon that passage of Scripture which relates, that, during the famine in Samaria, "the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung" was sold "for five pieces of silver," 2 Kings vi. 25.

This supposes that the "dove's dung" was required for some similar purpose. We must confess that we are not of that opinion. It appears little likely that persons under the

present extremities of famine should so strongly covet, and prize so highly, the manure for a future vegetable, even supposing that vegetables were cultivable *within* a walled town. It is known, that the name of "dove's dung" has been in the East applied to different vegetable substances; and it was probably to something of the sort, some bean, or berry, or root, that the statement in the sacred text applies. It claims to be added, that the employment of pigeon's dung, in the culture of melons and cucumbers, is the only use of manure known in Persian agriculture. The dung of animals is indeed very carefully collected; it is not, however, applied to this purpose, but used for winter fuel. All substances of this nature are formed into cakes, and, being dried in the sun, are stored up for this service. There is an allusion to this use of dung in Ezek. iv. 15.

Many of the manufactures of Persia are beautiful, particularly their gold and silver brocades, their silks, and their imitations of Cashmere shawls, which are made of the wool of Kerman. They also make a variety of cotton cloths, but not of so fine a texture as those of India. They have also several manufactories of glass, and some of a coarse ware

resembling china, but they have not succeeded in bringing these wares to any perfection. In mechanical arts the Persians are not inferior to any other nations of the east. They work well in steel; and their swords, although brittle, are of excellent temper and edge. In the arts of carving and gilding, few nations are more skilful. They also enamel upon gold and silver in a very beautiful manner, and their ornaments made of these metals and precious stones often display admirable workmanship.

Chemistry, as now understood in Europe, is unknown in Persia; but the occult science of alchemy continues to be the favourite pursuit of some of the most learned in that country. After giving an account of the strange effects produced among a party of Persians by the view and operation of an electrical machine, the Rev. Justin Perkins says: "The Persians, much as they were nonplussed by the electrical machine, are not wanting in 'science, falsely so called.' They are naturally acute metaphysicians; but, unguided by 'Divine philosophy,' their speculations amount to little more than the entities and quiddities of the schoolmen and dreams of the old Greek writers. Alchemy is still labouring in the brains of multitudes

in Persia, with all the magic interest and ponderous importance that it possessed in Europe in bygone centuries. I have been repeatedly asked whether the electrical machine had no connexion with the science of converting the baser metals into gold—a theory very grateful to an Asiatic mind; and I have found it very difficult to persuade those who made the inquiry that such was not the case. One of my companions entertained Mar Yohannan,* in America, with experiments in gilding by the new electro-magnetic process. He introduced a silver watch, presented to the bishop by friends in this country, into an opaque liquid mixture; and after some time, on taking out the watch, lo, it was gold! The bishop stared a few moments, delighted and amazed, without saying a word; at length he thus gave utterance to his emotions:—'You make *chémie,*' (the term by which the Persians denote alchemy;) 'the people in our country say the English can make *chémie;* before I did not believe; but it is true; you do make *chémie.*' He soon understood it, however, as a superinducing rather than a transmuting process."

* *A Nestorian* bishop, who went to America with the missionaries.

In medicine, the system of practice is derived from the Greeks, and has descended to the Persians with very little alteration, as explained and enlarged upon in the writings of Avicenna, and others of their most learned doctors. Galen and Hippocrates, whom they call Galenous and Bocrat, are still their masters. They are wholly unacquainted with anatomy and the circulation of the blood. The Mohammedan religion will not allow of dissection, so that they are deprived of the means of acquiring knowledge through the discoveries of anatomy; and their skill in surgery is, consequently, as rude as their knowledge of medicine. They class both their diseases and remedies under four heads—hot, cold, moist, or dry; each may contain one or more of these qualities; and the great principle maintained is, that the disease must be cured by remedies of an opposite quality. If, for instance, an illness has arisen from moisture, dry remedies must be given; and hot diseases are alone to be cured by cooling medicines. Many instances of the application of this theory may be found in books of travels. In one case, mentioned by Mr. Scott Waring, a poor man was violently

affected with heart-burn; and instead of pre scribing an internal medicine, the doctor heaped upon his breast a large quantity of ic and snow, which they said was an effectu cure. Kotzebue relates a similar instance the treatment of one of the musicians belon ing to the Russian embassy. This man bein a Mohammedan, had not sufficient confiden in the physician of the embassy, and desir that a Persian doctor might be called in. H disorder was an inflammatory fever. Tl Persian doctor appeared, and prescribed for t patient a large quantity of ice, which the po fellow swallowed with ecstasy, and died t third day.

The representation of animate objects, a particularly of the human figure, is regard by rigid Moslems as being forbidden by M hammed, and in this they are no doubt corre The Persians do not, however, so understa the prohibition, or, understanding, do not he it. Paintings of human and animal figu abound in their houses and palaces, and seen upon their ornamental wares. The colo of the Persian painters are very brilliant; a when they draw portraits, they usually succ *in taking* likenesses. Some of their les

drawings, which are highly glazed and painted on wood, display much industry and care; but they are as yet unacquainted with the rules of perspective, and with those principles of just proportion which are essential to form a good painting. It is no uncommon thing in a Persian painting to see a man nearly as tall as a mountain; or, in the representations of battles, a line of guns, on which is formed a line of infantry, over whom is another of cavalry. One may also see a picture representing in one part the commencement of an action, and in another the defeat of the enemy.

Any one who has examined the representations of ancient Persian sculptures, will have seen the kings and other great personages represented in colossal proportions as compared with those around them. So with their descendants, in whose paintings strangers, whether friends or enemies, are usually represented in much smaller dimensions than the Persians. Thus, sir John Malcolm was an especial favourite with the last generation of Persians; yet, in the palace of Shiraz, where the hall of audience is adorned with representations of his reception as ambassador, they have not spared even him. The Persians are shown as tall

and towering beings; while sir John stands straddling in his regimentals, a diminutive and dwarfish creature, as also all his staff.

In the higher branches of science the Persians can scarcely be said to know more than their ancestors. They have a limited knowledge of mathematics; and they study astronomy chiefly for the purpose of becoming adepts in judicial astrology, a so-called science, in which the whole nation, from the monarch to the peasant, has the most implicit faith. The system of Ptolemy, both with respect to the forms and motions of the heavenly bodies, and the shape and surface of the earth, is that in which they believe. An abstract of the Copernican system has indeed been translated, through which, aided by the instruction of Europeans connected with the embassies, some individuals have acquired a better knowledge of the subject; but it is not to be expected that long-cherished belief in such matters of a prejudiced and superstitious nation will very soon or very easily be shaken.

The same, very nearly, may be said of geography. By means of European maps and instructions, some few—a very few, in the higher and most learned classes, have acquired *tolerably* correct notions of the relative positions

and magnitudes of different countries. But of the great body even of the educated classes it may be said that, independent of their erroneous notions of the form of the earth, their knowledge of its surface is limited to a very imperfect acquaintance with the territories of those kingdoms in their immediate vicinity; nor do they understand the art of surveying in a degree which would enable them to lay down with any exactness whatever, that portion of the globe which they themselves inhabit. "The New World" of America is the great geographical mystery to them. A missionary of that country, (the Rev. Justin Perkins,) voyaging from Constantinople to Trebizond in a vessel, had occasion to ascertain their notions on this point. "Takvoor told the Turks that I was from the New World, the appellation by which America is known to them. They stared at me with amazement, and said it was a day favoured beyond any they had ever anticipated that they were permitted to behold an inhabitant of the New World. I inquired of them where they supposed the New World to be situated, and they pointed upwards! The captain informed me, that his Persian passengers on the previous voyage to Constan-

tinople developed a regular theory on this subject. They told him that their countrymen who know of the New World suppose it to be located in the skies, and hold that the English discovered it by means of a very large telescope!" On board was a Hajji, who was very curious respecting the position of the New World. "According to our ideas," he said, "there is only one world; and the New World must be some part of that; yet, if it be a part, how can it be so far distant?" The captain endeavoured to explain to him that a great ocean must be crossed to reach the New World. "But there is no sea larger than *Akh Dengis*, the Mediterranean Sea," he replied; and so difficult was it to convince him of the existence of a larger body of water than the Mediterranean, that the attempt to satisfy him was abandoned as hopeless.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY: INSTITUTED 1799.